

How to build the best list of colleges for you...

College Risk Continuum:

**Low
Risk**

**Medium
Risk**

**High
Risk**

Place the colleges you are considering over the line based on the risk level and possibility of acceptance:

***The overall goal of this exercise is to spread out your risk and guarantee that you will have some choices to make when decision time rolls around. Diversify, and take the time up front to balance your list before you apply and find schools that FIT YOU.**

- **High Risk** - schools with admitted student test ranges and GPA's above your current standing. High Risk could also be schools where your test score/GPA meets their range, but the school is highly selective. You can check college acceptance rates to find out the percentage of applicants admitted. If that acceptance rate is low, say below 30%, then they will most certainly be looking for non-academic reasons you might be a good match, like extracurricular accomplishments, the strength of your essay, and the enthusiasm expressed in your teacher letters of recommendation. All Ivy League Colleges are high risk, even for those high school students in the top 10% of their class, because their percentage of applicants admitted is 10% or less. They can fill their freshman classes many times over with valedictorians and perfect ACT/SAT scorers.
- **Medium Risk** - schools where your test scores and GPA place you in the academic range of already accepted students. This makes you a good candidate for the school based on your performance, and you have a reasonable chance for being accepted as well as being denied. In other words you are in the ballpark. Essays, extracurriculars and teacher letters of recommendation will be considered here too.
- **Low Risk** - schools where you are an excellent candidate for admission based on your academic credentials. Low risk schools commonly include Colorado state institutions who set very specific academic credentials required for admission and can also include colleges and universities who admit over 70% of their applicants.

DO NOT INCLUDE ANY SCHOOLS ON YOUR LIST THAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO ATTEND – i.e. Safety Schools. ASK YOURSELF THIS QUESTION: “IF I AM DENIED AT ALL MY SCHOOLS BUT ONE, WILL I BE HAPPY GOING TO THAT SCHOOL?”



Your list will be excellent if you can answer YES to the above question and your continuum looks like this...

X	X		X		X		X	X
Low Risk			Medium Risk			High Risk		



On the other hand, if your list looks like this below, the odds that you will be admitted to only one school are high. Applying to more than a few high risk schools doesn't mean you will have any better chance of being admitted to any one of them. If your list looks like this, be sure you will be happy attending your one low risk school.

X							X	X	X	X
Low Risk			Medium Risk			High Risk				

Keep in mind, If you spread out your risk, you give yourself more opportunity at the finish of the process for choice!

Each student's set of schools and background record will create its own unique Risk Continuum. See your counselor or the Post Grad Center for assistance with developing your final list of schools and help finding schools that fit you.