

## Top 10 things to remember

Here's a collection of the 10 most important things to remember from this guide - other than the "bars plus spike" concept and the need to build a compelling story.

Each will be explained in greater detail through the guide.

1. A great high school (one that is a traditional feeder to the top universities) matters more than anything else - but don't lose hope if you're at an average high school - just be prepared to **work harder and more innovatively**
2. **Middle school doesn't matter** - your GPA, your extracurricular clubs. Some experiences help you to a faster start in high school, but that's it
3. Use your summers wisely to accumulate both **international experiences and entrepreneurial experiences**
4. Spending money helps, but **be careful where you spend it**. For instance, attending the Harvard Summer Program can be a great experience and an edge in Ivy League admissions, but I wouldn't spend \$2000 to have a "professional" edit your admissions essays
5. Grades make a big difference **until you pass the "academic bar"**. At that point, the marginal effort required (for instance, to raise an SAT score from 2300 to 2350) isn't worth it
6. Set yourself apart from **those with similar backgrounds**. An Asian-American who excels at math is common. An Asian-American who is a two-sport varsity athlete isn't, and **admissions committees will remember that**
7. Starting a club is the **fastest way to achieve a leadership position**
8. Prepare your application carefully. In particular, two components that make a huge difference are your resume/brag-sheet and your essay responses
9. **Tailor your application for each school**. As an example, Stanford values innovation and entrepreneurship. Demonstrate the entrepreneurship you've exhibited. Harvard values intellectual depth. Market the college-level academic work you've already completed, the college-level research that you've done, any scientific or academic publications, etc.
10. **Depth is more important than breadth**. It comes down to a compelling story. It comes down to a clear spike. Show passion for a specific area (eg, Science, History, Music) while demonstrating solid performance in the other key categories (academics and extracurricular involvement)