

MARK MOODY'S QUICK & DIRTY COLLEGE LIST BUILDER

As you start your college research, this tool will help you identify “possible” and “likely” options to anchor your list. There are colleges of all types in each zone—they can be reference points for expanding your search. No college application outcome is guaranteed, but this spectrum of colleges can provide a quick jumpstart to your search for the right place for you!

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- ★ Find your cumulative junior or senior GPA. Recalculate to a 4.0 scale using only grades from core academic courses (arts and athletics usually don't count).
- ★ Find the color zone closest to your GPA (be conservative) and test scores from either SAT Reading & Writing + Math (1600 total possible) or ACT Composite. The colleges in the corresponding category are **POSSIBLE** admission options— IF everything else in your application satisfies that institution's admission priorities in a given year. This is your **home color zone**. Also called “match,” your profile is within the middle 50% of admitted students. You have a realistic chance of being admitted.
- ★ Colleges ABOVE your home color should be **LIKELY** admission options. This means your profile (GPA, scores, course rigor) exceeds the mid-50% profile of admitted students. You can be reasonably confident that you'll be admitted with a good application effort.
- ★ Colleges BELOW your home color are **REACHES**, which means they are NOT LIKELY to admit you. Your profile is below the mid-50% profile of admitted students. Note: The very few students admitted to reaches usually belong to special categories (or “hooks”) that fit a given college's priorities— some of these could be: recruited athletes, extremely accomplished fine artists, legacies, development cases (big donors), and under-represented groups. Jumping more than one zone will take you to extremely improbable territory.
- ★ If you are interested in **merit scholarships**, go to the colleges ABOVE your possible/ home color, and research which ones offer merit awards. This also applies for **financial aid** packages—the best ones, meeting the most need with the lowest loan amounts, will often come from colleges that are more likely for you. **Need awareness** is a factor at many colleges, meaning they take into account the financial need of applicants, often reserving the most generous packages for the strongest students. If you expect to need a lot of financial aid, you should focus your applications on places that can meet full need and where your profile is stronger than most applicants (your LIKELY options.)
- ★ Factors which potentially **could strengthen admission probability to colleges in your Possible color zone** include: the **rigor** of your curriculum, trends in grades, “hooks,” primary and supplemental essays, your academic ability and potential as reflected in teacher recommendations, your character as reflected in counselor recommendations, your demonstrated ability to positively impact a residential community.
- ★ **Test scores** that are much higher than the scores in your corresponding GPA range may impact likelihood, but not always. This is more likely in the purple to green zones.
- ★ Some colleges are “**test-score optional**.” (See fairtest.org for a list.) Applying without SAT or ACT at these colleges implies increased emphasis on the transcript-- so GPA should be in or above the top of the middle 50% range, with a challenging curriculum.

MOODY'S NOTES ON SELECTIVITY, PREDICTABILITY, & LIST-BUILDING

- ★ There is no research or evidence that shows that attending a more selective college will significantly alter your prospects for jobs or graduate school, or your lifetime salary potential. The best plan is to focus in your possible or likely zones, where you will be appreciated for who you are, and supported in discovering and achieving your personal goals.
- ★ College admission is not a gamble. Applying to more reach schools does not increase the likelihood that one will admit you, and there are no surprises in admission decisions.
- ★ Bottom line, your grades over time and the rigor of your courses in the context of your school are always the most powerful pieces of your admission profile.
- ★ Restrictive early action or binding early decision applications can increase likelihood of admission, but usually not in a way that makes a reach significantly more likely; rather, they can tip the scales for a Possible zone option and, sometimes, for a reasonable Reach if the right factors are in place. Choose this option carefully, and only if you have a clear first choice. If you are applying for financial aid, ask about how this plays into ED consideration.
- ★ GPA's are hard to standardize. Use your school's profile for colleges, any other resources your school offers for assessing admission likelihood, and the advice of a counselor to get a realistic sense of whether your GPA might be inflated or deflated relative to the color zone criteria.
- ★ Engineering is often more competitive for entry than other disciplines by at least one selectivity zone. At particular colleges, this could also apply to other popular or over-subscribed programs.
- ★ These groups of colleges and their stated profiles represent averages. It is up to the student to research the middle-50% ranges of admitted students, to assess their own record honestly, and to consult a counselor or admission officer on the finer points of their complete profile as an applicant and potential "fit" with a college's admissions priorities.
- ★ These zones are not fixed. Even in one admission cycle, a college's applicant pool and institutional goals can shift.
- ★ A smart final application list consists of 6-8 carefully chosen colleges, barring unusual circumstances or financial aid uncertainty. No more than a couple of these should come from categories below your "possible" color zone—the law of diminishing returns applies here.
- ★ Your ability to communicate authentic interest in your application and in communication with college admission offices is important at every level of selectivity—take your "likelies" and "possibles" seriously and they'll be more inclined to invite you to enroll!

MMQDCLB COLLEGE PRISM COLOR ZONES

PURPLE | UNDER 3.0, 1050+, 23+

NE: College of the Atlantic, Salisbury, Simmons, *St. Anselm*, *St. Michael's*

M-A/NYPA: Adelphi, **Allegheny**, **Juniata**, Marymount Manhattan, Pace U, St. John's U, **Susquehanna**, **Ursinus**, Wagner, **Washington College**

Midwest: Bradley, U Cincinnati, **Cornell College**, John Carroll, U Kansas, U Missouri, U Nebraska, Ohio U, Ripon, *Xavier U (OH)*

South: **Agnes Scott**⁺, Clark Atlanta[#], **Eckerd**, Flagler, FL International, Guilford, High Point, **Hollins**⁺, Loyola New Orleans, Randolph-Macon, **Roanoke**, **Stetson**, Xavier (LA)[#]

Southwest: Arizona State, U Houston, U New Mexico, **Northern Arizona**, U Oklahoma

West: Alaska Pacific, *Cal Lutheran*, Evergreen State (WA), **Fort Lewis**, Hawaii Pacific, U Hawaii-Manoa, Humboldt State (CA), College of ID, U of La Verne, **Linfield**, **Mills College**, Montana State, U Montana, U Northern Colorado, U North Texas, **Pacific U**, **Pacific Lutheran**, **Regis**, U Utah, Western State-CO, **Whittier**, U Wyoming

BLUE | 3.0-3.4, 1100+, 25+

NE: **Bennington**, Bentley, Bryant U, Champlain, *Clark U*, *Fairfield U*, Hampshire, U New Hampshire, U Mass, Providence, Quinnipiac, **Salve Regina**, **Wheaton College (MA)**

M-A/NYPA: **Clarkson U**, **Drew U**, Drexel, Eugene Lang, Fordham, *Goucher*, Hampton[#], *Hobart & William Smith*, Hofstra, Howard[#], *Ithaca College*, Marist, **McDaniel**, *Muhlenberg*, Sarah Lawrence, St. John's College (MD), *St. Lawrence*, Temple, **Union College**

Midwest: **Beloit**, *Creighton*, **Denison**, DePaul, **DePauw**, **Earlham**, **Gustavus Adolphus**, Hope College, **IL Wesleyan**, *Indiana U*, **Lake Forest**, **Kalamazoo**, **Knox**, **Loyola- Chicago**, *Marquette*, *Miami U of Ohio*, Ohio State, **Ohio Wesleyan**, Purdue, **St. Olaf**, Wittenberg, **College of Wooster**

South: Auburn, Belmont, **Birmingham-Southern**, **Centre**, College of Charleston, *Furman*^{*}, James Madison, **Millsaps**, Morehouse[#], Old Dominion, Rollins, Spelman⁺, Tampa

Southwest: U of Arizona, **Austin College**, **Baylor U**, **Hendrix**, **Southwestern U**, **St. Edward's (TX)**, St. John's College (NM)

West: **West:** Chapman U, U Colorado- Boulder, Colorado State U, Loyola Marymount, St. Mary's of CA, U of the Pacific, **U Portland**, **U Redlands**, U San Francisco, Seattle U, Western Washington U, **Willamette**

Other: Franklin U of Switzerland, Quest University, Simon Fraser (Canada)

REGIONS New England, Mid-Atlantic / NY & PA, South, Southwest, West, Other (International)
The zones include close to 300 colleges, representing many different categories and sizes, which tend to attract applicants from beyond their home region. They are good starting points for understanding college options. (Scholarship and financial aid policies change often-- and just because a college isn't highlighted doesn't mean it won't meet your need well or offer a merit award. Do your research!)

KEY +All-women's | # Historically Black Colleges & Universities | * Notable recent selectivity increases
A reputation for generous financial aid | *A reputation for generous scholarships*

MMQDCLB COLLEGE PRISM COLOR ZONES

(CONTINUED)

GREEN | 3.5-3.6, 1200+, 27+

NE: Emerson, **Holy Cross**, **Mount Holyoke**⁺, *U Vermont*

M-A/NYPA: American U*, Bard, *U Delaware*, **Dickinson**, **Franklin & Marshall**, **Gettysburg**, U Maryland, U Pittsburgh, *Rensselaer Polytechnic (RPI)*, Rochester Inst. of Tech (RIT), Skidmore, Stevens Inst. of Tech, Syracuse

Midwest: **Lawrence U**, U Minnesota, **Rose-Hulman**, St Louis U

South: *U Alabama*, **Clemson**, **Elon**, Oxford College of Emory, *Rhodes College*, **U of the South (Sewanee)**, Virginia Tech

Southwest: *SMU*, *TCU*, **Trinity U-TX**

West: Brigham Young, Cal Poly-SLO, *CO School of Mines*, U Denver, **Gonzaga**, **Lewis & Clark**, **U Puget Sound**, *Whitman*

Other: U British Columbia, University College-Dublin (Ireland), U Edinburgh, U Glasgow, U of St Andrews (Scotland), U Toronto

YELLOW | 3.7-3.8, 1300+, 30+

NE: Babson*, **Bates**, Brandeis, **Colby**, **Connecticut College**, *Northeastern**, **Smith**⁺, **Trinity College**, **Worcester Polytechnic (WPI)**

M-A/NYPA: **Barnard**⁺, **Bucknell**, **Bryn Mawr**⁺, **Colgate**, *George Washington*, **Hamilton**, **Lafayette**, **Lehigh**, **U Rochester**, USMA-West Point, US Naval Academy, Villanova

Midwest: *Case Western Reserve**, **Grinnell**, **Kenyon**, **Oberlin**, **Macalester**, U Wisconsin

South: U Florida, U Georgia, *U Miami*, **U Richmond**, **Wake Forest**, **Washington & Lee**

Southwest: Texas A&M

West: UC-Santa Barbara, **Occidental**, Pepperdine, **Pitzer**, Reed, U San Diego, Santa Clara*, **Scripps**⁺, U Washington, US Air Force Academy

Other: Durham U (UK), McGill (Canada), Trinity College-Dublin (Ireland)

REGIONS New England, Mid-Atlantic / NY & PA, South, Southwest, West, Other (International)

The zones include close to 300 colleges, representing many different categories and sizes, which tend to attract applicants from beyond their home region. They are good starting points for understanding college options. (Scholarship and financial aid policies change often-- and just because a college isn't highlighted doesn't mean it won't meet your need well or offer a merit award. Do your research!)

KEY +All-women's | # Historically Black Colleges & Universities | * Notable recent selectivity increases
A reputation for generous financial aid | *A reputation for generous scholarships*

MMQDCLB COLLEGE PRISM COLOR ZONES

(CONTINUED)

ORANGE | 3.9-4.0, 1400+, 32+

NE: Boston College, Boston U*, Bowdoin, Middlebury, Olin, Tufts U, Wesleyan U, Wellesley

M-A/NYPA: Carnegie Mellon, Haverford, NYU, Swarthmore, Vassar

Midwest: Carleton, U Michigan*, Notre Dame, Washington U St Louis

South: Davidson, Emory, Georgia Tech, UNC-Chapel Hill, Tulane*, U Virginia, William & Mary

Southwest: U Texas-Austin

West: Cal-Berkeley, UCLA, UCSD, Claremont McKenna, Colorado College*, Harvey Mudd, USC

RED | 4.0+, 1500+, 33

NE: Amherst, Brown U, Dartmouth, Harvard, MIT, Williams, Yale

M-A/NYPA: Columbia U, Cornell U, Georgetown, Johns Hopkins, U Penn, Princeton

Midwest: U Chicago, Northwestern

South: Duke U, Vanderbilt U

Southwest: Rice U

West: Cal Tech, Pomona, Stanford

Other: NYU-Abu Dhabi, Oxford, Cambridge, Minerva, Yale-NUS

(Note: Admission to the Red Zone colleges often requires these testing and GPA profiles, a rigorous curriculum, PLUS a special “hook” or story that distinguishes an applicant from among tens of thousands of competitive students in a global applicant pool. Remember, these colleges deny admission to at least 85 out of every 100 applicants.)

REGIONS New England, Mid-Atlantic / NY & PA, South, Southwest, West, Other (International)

The zones include close to 300 colleges, representing many different categories and sizes, which tend to attract applicants from beyond their home region. They are good starting points for understanding college options. (Scholarship and financial aid policies change often-- and just because a college isn't highlighted doesn't mean it won't meet your need well or offer a merit award. Do your research!)

KEY +All-women's | # Historically Black Colleges & Universities | * Notable recent selectivity increases
A reputation for generous financial aid | A reputation for generous scholarships