



What to Do if You're Wait-Listed

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You finally get that long-awaited letter from your top-choice school ... and you haven't been accepted or rejected, you've been wait-listed. Suddenly you're in admissions limbo. Here's what you should do while you wait to learn your admissions fate.

Don't Let It Get You Down

It's easy to view being placed on the wait list as a rejection. While it's no easy task getting off the wait list, it's not impossible either. Colleges use wait lists when they've accepted the maximum number of applicants, but still view some applicants as well qualified. The wait list is a safety net colleges use to fill their class if not enough accepted students enroll.

Don't get down if you've been placed on the wait list. "Don't beg or plea – that's not helpful for an admissions counselor," says Sonja Montiel, president of [College Confidence](#), an independent college counseling service. While you shouldn't feel dejected, keep in mind that your chances of being accepted from the wait list are slim. Instead of wasting time feeling down, take action to get off the wait list.

Decide Whether You Want to Stay on the Wait List

You have the option to remain on or remove yourself from the wait list. If you want to stay on the list, return the form indicating your interest to the college as soon as possible. If you've been placed on several lists, there's no reason why you can't stay on more than one.

Find Out What Your Chances Are

The number of students on wait lists varies. On average, 27 percent of all students who were wait-listed eventually gained admission, according to a [National Association for College Admission Counseling](#) (NACAC) report.

Check if the college ranks its wait list and ask if you can know your rank. If your school doesn't prioritize its list or won't tell you your rank, look at how many students were accepted from the wait list in the past. You can request information on how many students were accepted from the wait list in the past, according to the NACAC "[Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities in the College Admissions Process](#)."

Let the College Know You're Interested

Don't just wait out the wait list – make an active effort to get onto the roster of admitted students. “When a student receives a letter saying that they've been put on the waiting list, they should respond to the college immediately,” Montiel says.

Write the admissions office and emphasize your sincere desire to attend their school. Don't have your parents or counselors contact the school on your behalf. “It's really important that colleges hear directly from the student at all times and not from the parent” Montiel says.

Find out who represents your region in the admissions staff and send them an email explaining your situation and expressing your growing interest in attending their institution. Be specific and name courses, professors, extracurricular activities, sports teams and other features of the college that you're excited about and that match your goals.

Continue to Brag

Keep the admissions office updated on your latest grades, achievements and honors. Maintain email contact with your regional admissions representative, but don't swamp them. “Sending an email on a weekly basis saying the same thing dilutes the significance of whatever that student is sharing,” Montiel says, “If it's not new, don't email the admissions counselor.” Send in a new letter of recommendation that shows you in a different perspective. You may be reevaluated on this new information and it shows the college that you are serious.

Get On With Your Life

Make plans to attend another school. Send in your deposit to secure a place at your second-choice college. “This whole waiting list thing is about expectations and once students are able to let that expectation go, then they really find the value in the other college,” Montiel says. Even if you're disappointed, you'll probably find yourself happy at your second-choice school.

What to Do If You are Accepted

Congratulations, all your hard work paid off, but being admitted late will cost you. If you end up being accepted from the wait list, you'll have to forfeit the deposit you made at the college where you enrolled. Students admitted from the wait list may not have the same financial aid or housing opportunities of those accepted during the first round. NACAC's statement of student rights requires schools to answer students' questions on how being on the wait list will affect housing and financial aid. Reevaluate the school and decide if you're still interested enough to back out of the school where you've already committed.