

## Organizing your College Selection Process

This is the first of a weekly column on college preparation. It is written for both high school students and their parents, and will consist of essays like this one and questions and answers about the college selection process &ndash; in alternating weeks (one week an essay, the next week Q and A, etc.). Organize your college selection process. For many, the prospect of choosing a college to attend can be overwhelming. Because it&rsquo;s such an important decision, the idea of managing all the applications and remembering all the deadlines can seem overwhelming. By purchasing some basic office supplies and following these simple directions, you can set up a system that will keep you organized. What to buy at your office supplies superstore: A large, academic year, laminated wall calendar Packages of colored pens, highlighters, and dry erase markers (match the colors and get as many colors as there are colleges you&rsquo;re considering) A pocket-sized calendar A piece of posterboard A box of 1/3-cut, manila file folders, with adhesive labels A file box with hanging files What to do with it: The file folders and box are to hold materials you receive from colleges and scholarship applications. Use half the hanging files for each purpose (college materials and scholarship applications), and label accordingly. One folder should be labeled for each college (i.e. ohio university, thomas more college, kentucky state university). One folder should be labeled for each scholarship you know about, plus several extras should be placed in the back for scholarships you become aware of later. The posterboard is to keep track of the pros and cons of each of your schools. Using a marker, simply divide up the posterboard into boxes, one for each school. Using the colored pens, write the name of the schools, one at the top of each box. Next, write a plus sign in the top half and a minus sign in the bottom half. After you&rsquo;re done, post it on your wall (somewhere everyone can see it). Then write down things you like and don&rsquo;t like about your schools in their boxes. The laminated wall calendar is for posting on your wall with the posterboard described above. On it you will label all the important deadlines at the schools you are considering, as well as college visits and college fair dates. Assign one color marker to each school and write all of that school&rsquo;s dates in that color. Assign one color to all individual scholarships, and use that color to list all of their deadlines. The pocket-sized calendar is for you to have a copy of your wall calendar with you all the time. Copy everything off the large calendar into the small one. Carry it and use it. Now you have a system to organize applications and scholarship materials, as well as a look at your deadlines and your thoughts about each college. It will help insure you don&rsquo;t miss any deadlines and keep all the information you receive together and organized. It will also allow your family to keep up with what you&rsquo;re doing and thinking about the process. Submit college questions to the College Answer Guy at [lance@collegeanswerguy.com](mailto:lance@collegeanswerguy.com) and his web sites visit <http://www.collegeanswerguy.com> and <http://collegeprep101.com>.