



## APPLY TO A DIVERSE SET OF COLLEGES

by the student editors of ***CHOOSE THE RIGHT COLLEGE & GET ACCEPTED!***  
a Students Helping Students™ book

One of the most important things you should do while deciding where to apply is to diversify your college choices based on the difficulty of getting in and overall cost of attendance. Even if you have every bit of confidence in your ability to get into a top school and get enough financial aid and scholarships to pay for it, you have to have a Plan B, and it should be a Plan B with which you can be happy. You may never have to go to Plan B, but you'll feel more confident and secure if you know that you're okay if for whatever reason you can't get into your "reach" or ideal school.

*"I think the most important thing is to really like your safeties. I loved my safety, and I got into it first, so it took a lot of pressure off all the other schools. I have a lot of friends who ended up at their safeties, which they didn't like and they're sort of unhappy there."*

**Junior,  
Harvard University**

You can call them whatever you like, but make sure that you apply to some reach, medium difficulty, and safety schools in terms of difficulty of acceptance.

- A **reach** school is one where your chance of admittance is not likely, but not outside the realm of possibility (25% chance or less).
- A **medium difficulty** school is one where you're pretty sure you can get in (let's call it a 75% chance).
- A **safety** is one where your chance of admittance is pretty much a sure thing (90-100%).

Now that you have the categories, how do you spread out the odds? There's no science to this and no magic formula, but based on our interviews with students and checking with admissions counselors, here's a ratio you can start with:

Let's say you're applying to between six and eight schools. The bulk of them—about three or four—should fall in the medium difficulty category. One or two should be reaches. You don't want to be rejected from every school you apply to, but at the same time it's good to shoot high with a couple, because hey, you never know. And definitely select one or two safeties to fall back on. Just keep in mind that you could end up going to one of them, so make sure you like them enough to live with that if it happens.

*"I didn't apply to some super-competitive schools, but I wish I had. In retrospect, I might've gotten in, but I got intimidated and didn't leave myself the opportunity. I loved where I ended up going, but my advice would be to not sell yourself short and apply to several reach schools, even if they seem intimidating."*

**Recent Grad,  
Wesleyan University**