

Getting into an elite college ****

Ivy League zombies

90 minutes
individual work

Introduction

Looking to study at Harvard? Nearly 30,000 exceptionally qualified students applied for 2,131 places in the Harvard University undergraduate class of 2019. That's an acceptance rate of 7.32 per cent. At Princeton University, 21,964 applicants fought for 2,181 spots. In total, the eight colleges in the so-called Ivy League collected more than 200,000 applications from the nation's (and the world's) top-performing high school students – and only sent acceptance letters to 11.9 percent of them. The term 'Ivy League' was born in the 1930s as a name for the fledgling football league that included eight prominent north-eastern colleges: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Penn, Princeton, and Yale. Today, the Ivy League is less synonymous with sports than its academic rigor, professional achievement and exclusivity. The tightly concentrated demand at the Ivy League schools can be at least partially explained by the power of the Ivy League brand name, which many high-achieving students (and their parents) equate with the only path to success and wealth. The increasing selectivity of the Ivy League admissions process only exacerbates the problem, creating hordes of Ivy-obsessed students who place unhealthy pressure on themselves to be accepted.

APPROVED
COLLEGE
APPLICATION

The *purpose* of this web task is to gain a general understanding of what the admissions process at some of the prestigious colleges in the United States involve. The *theme* of the web task is the equitability and competitiveness of US college applications and admissions. The *final task* is to evaluate two college application essays and write an acceptance or rejection letter to each of the two applicants.

Exploration

<https://medium.com/s/story/the-dirty-secret-of-elite-college-admissions-d41077df670e>

1	Read <i>The Dirty Secret of Elite College Admissions</i> . Write down the percentages of applicants that made the cut at the Ivy League colleges mentioned.
2	Summarise what the author believes to be the 'dirty secret'. How credible do you think that is? Why?
3	If you were to apply to any of these colleges, what could or would you do to increase your chances of getting admitted?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_jNTOwePU (3:33)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-OLIJUXwKU> (2:18)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AB-5dCFQrs> (5:45)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q8IyAS5P2o> (3:04)

Watch each of the YouTube videos listed above.

Take notes that reflect:

- how most college admissions processes work;
- what admissions staff look for in applications;
- how the best essays stand out.

Final Task

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZ0Gar0cz-Iv> (2:21)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psOFIsQSBfA> (1:59)

Your final task is to review the two college application essays listed above. The first one is a written essay, read by the student who submitted it to Stanford University, an Ivy League college in New York. The second one is a video essay, submitted to Chapman University (California), prestigious liberal arts college.

1. Decide on a total of 5 criteria that admission officers in the videos you watched use to determine *initial selection*, *wait list*, and *final admission or rejection*. From a holistic perspective – so the *message* –, and knowing what you know, on which pile would each of these two applications land? Justify your initial determination.
2. Rate each essay, using the following rubric:
<http://www.simeonca.org/ourpages/auto/2012/9/20/46923509/Personal%20Statement%20Rubric.doc>
3. Write a letter of acceptance or rejection to the applicant based on either one of the submitted essays.

You can find many examples online, but do your best to personalise the letters.