



## INTRODUCTION

It is important to become familiar with the terms safety school, match school, and reach school. Knowing these terms enables you to manage your expectations and ensures your success.

## FOUR STEPS

1. Familiarize yourself with three types of schools.

2. Consult freshman class profiles and compare your academic qualifications.

3. Determine your school types to manage your expectations and ensure your success.

4. Apply to least two safety schools.



### THREE SCHOOL TYPES

The terms safety, match, and reach refer to the probability of being accepted to a college. Nothing about the college admission process is absolute, however, classifying a school as safety, match, or reach enables you to manage your expectations. Also, classifying schools enables you to identify safety schools where you have a high probability of acceptance. Safety schools provide exactly what their name implies, safety. They are a plan B or plan C if you are not admitted to your match or reach schools. Safety schools are your college admission parachute.

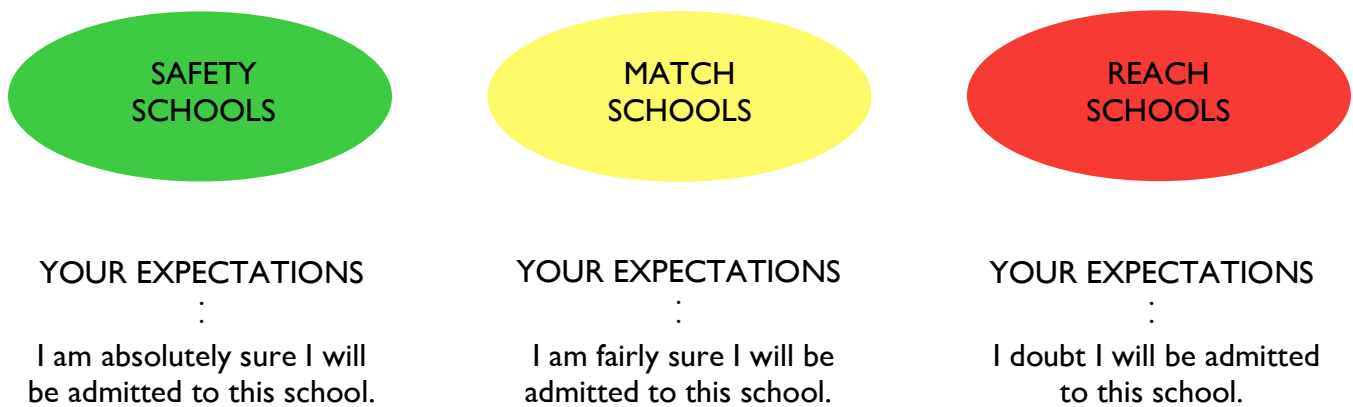


FIGURE 1: THREE SCHOOL TYPES

### WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

Your standardized exam scores and grade point average are important criteria for the admission decision at most schools. For each school you consider applying to, consult the freshman class profile to determine the standardized exam scores and grade point averages of last year’s admitted class. From this data, you can establish your expectations for admission.

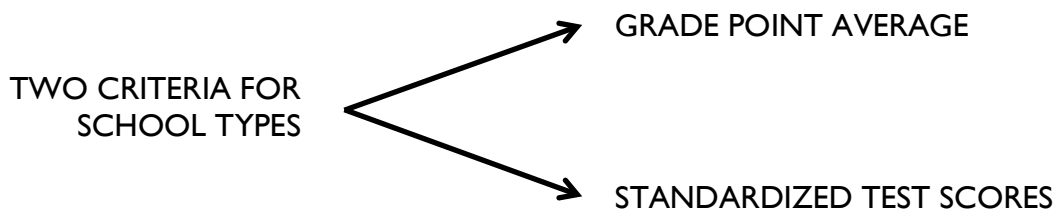


FIGURE 2: TWO CRITERIA FOR SCHOOL TYPES



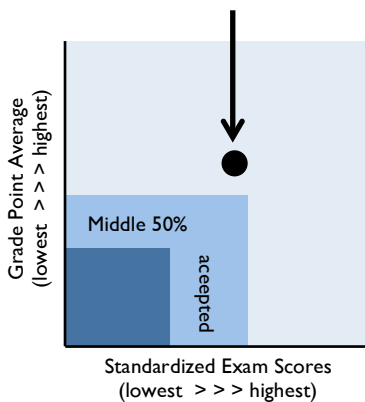
## HOW DO I KNOW IF A SCHOOL IS A SAFETY, MATCH, OR REACH SCHOOL?

Check the freshman class profile for last year's admitted class. A freshman class profile is a listing of the admission statistics for the most recently admitted freshman class for a particular college. There are no guarantees for college admission, however, the probability of admission to a safety school is usually higher than a match or reach school because of the importance of your standardized exam scores and grade point average in the admission process.



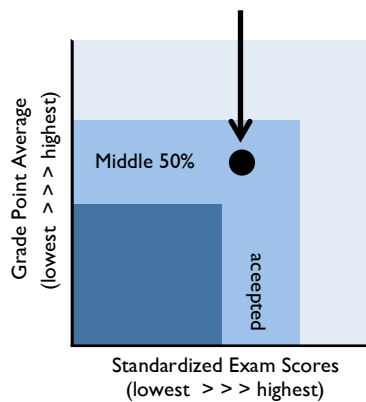
A college where your academic credentials, such as your standardized exam scores and grade point average, are *above* the college's middle 50% range of accepted students.

Exam score and GPA in the light blue box indicate that it is highly likely you will be accepted.



A college where your academic credentials, such as your standardized exam scores and grade point average, *match* the college's middle 50% range of accepted students.

Exam score and GPA in the blue box indicate there is good chance you will be accepted.



A college where your academic credentials, such as your standardized exam scores and grade point average, are *below* the college's middle 50% range of accepted students.

Exam score and GPA in the dark blue box indicate it is difficult for you to be accepted.

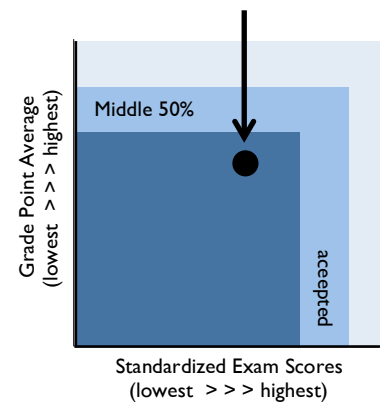


FIGURE 3: DEFINING SAFETY, MATCH & REACH SCHOOLS

### COLOR KEY

Light blue box: Represents GPA and standardized exam scores *above* the middle 50% range of accepted students.

Medium blue box: Represents GPA and standardized exam scores *within* the middle 50% range of accepted students.

Dark blue box: Represents GPA and standardized exam scores *below* the middle 50% range of accepted students.



### AUTUMN LEAF EXAMPLE

In our book, *The Ultimate College Application Guide*, Autumn Leaf, a fictitious high school senior, applies to five colleges. The schools she applied to are listed below. Follow this example and learn how Autumn classified each of her schools as safety, match, or reach.



FIGURE 4: FIVE COLLEGES WHERE AUTUMN LEAF APPLIED

### SAFETY & REACH & MATCH

Autumn Leaf applied to two safety, one match, and two reach schools. On the next page, learn how Autumn determined these classifications.

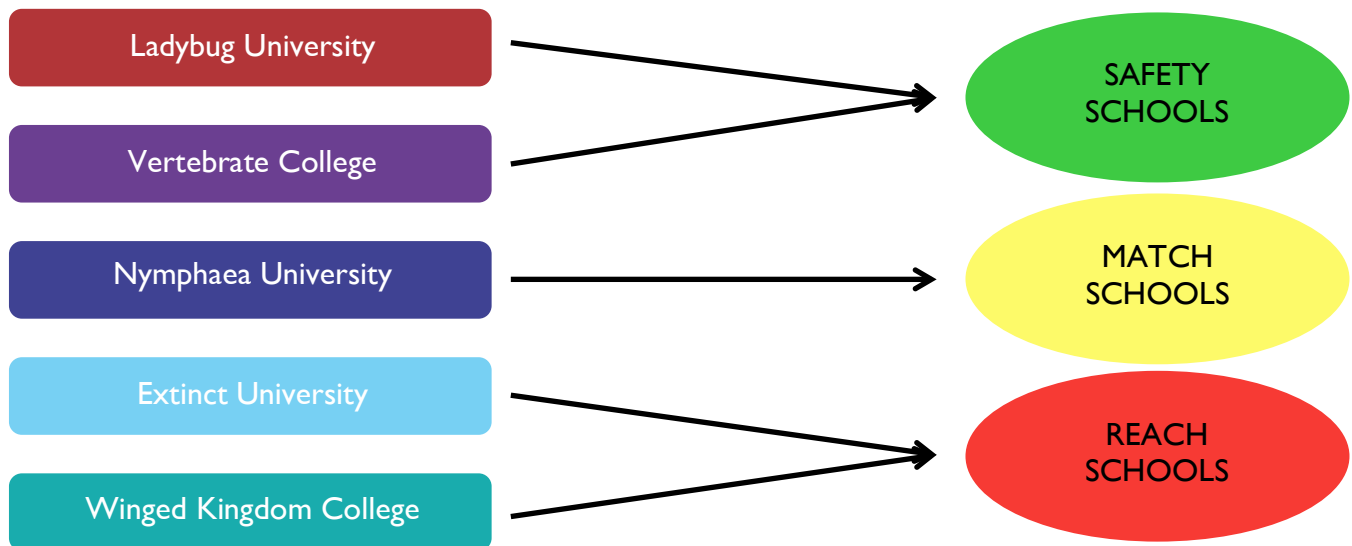


FIGURE 5: SCHOOL TYPE FOR FIVE COLLEGES WHERE AUTUMN LEAF APPLIED



### AUTUMN LEAF EXAMPLE (continued)

Autumn’s standardized exam score and grade point average are listed in Table 1. She searched for the freshman class profile for each college she applied to using the search criteria, “college name” + “freshman class profile”. She recorded her results in Table 2 below. Autumn compared her exam score and GPA in Table 1 with her search results in Table 2 to determine school types for each college.

AUTUMN LEAF’S STANDARDIZED EXAM SCORE & GRADE POINT AVERAGE		
	Standardized Exam Score	Grade Point Average
Autumn Leaf’s Results	2025	3.6

TABLE 1: AUTUMN LEAF’S STANDARDIZED EXAM SCORE & GRADE POINT AVERAGE

SCHOOL TYPES FOR AUTUMN LEAF			
	Middle 50% High School Range for Accepted Students		
Freshman Class Profile for Each School Autumn Applied to	Standardized Exam Score	Grade Point Average	School Type
Ladybug University	1630-1940	3.2 – 3.5	Safety School
Vertebrate College	1700-2000	3.3 – 3.5	Safety School
Nymphaea University	1900-2230	3.5 – 4.0	Match School
Extinct University	2200-2400	3.7 – 4.2	Reach School
Winged Kingdom College	2260-2400	3.9 – 4.5	Reach School

TABLE 2: SCHOOL TYPES FOR AUTUMN LEAF

COLOR KEY

- Autumn’s high school GPA and standardized exam score were *above* the middle 50% range of accepted students.
- Autumn’s high school GPA and standardized exam score were *within* the middle 50% range of accepted students.
- Autumn’s high school GPA and standardized exam score were *below* the middle 50% range of accepted students.



## CONCLUSION

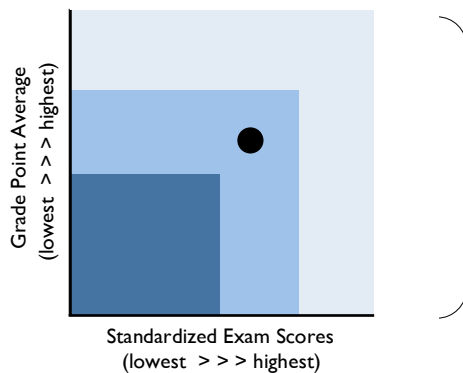
1. Familiarize yourself with three types of schools.

SAFETY  
SCHOOLS

MATCH  
SCHOOLS

REACH  
SCHOOLS

2. Consult freshman class profiles and compare your academic qualifications.



Consult the freshman class profile for each school you apply to and compare how your standardized exam score and grade point average differ from the most recently admitted freshman class.

3. Determine your school types to manage your expectations and ensure your success.

Ladybug University

Vertebrate College

Nymphaea University

Extinct University

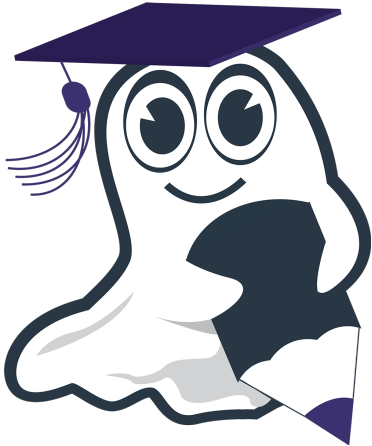
Winged Kingdom College

SAFETY  
SCHOOLS

MATCH  
SCHOOLS

REACH  
SCHOOLS

4. Apply to at least two safety schools like Autumn Leaf in the example above.



We wish you all the best  
in your college search!

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September 2015: Release Date