

Extracurricular Activities Life Outside the Classroom

Sure, life in school is pretty interesting. You've got algebraic equations, Bunsen burners, sentence diagrams... but chances are, you've got commitments outside of school, too. Maybe you have a part time job, play in a band, are on a sports team, or do volunteer work.

Colleges Care

The good news is that colleges pay attention to your life both inside and outside the classroom. Yes, your academics probably come first, but your activities reveal a great deal about you, such as:

- How you've made a meaningful contribution to something
- What your non-academic interests are
- Whether you can maintain a long-term commitment
- Whether you can manage your time and priorities
- What diversity you'd bring to the student body

Maintaining a Balance

Keep in mind, colleges are not interested in seeing you "do it all."

"We're looking for a commitment to and a passion for an activity outside of the academic setting—we're looking for depth rather than breadth," explains Nanci Tessier, a college admissions director.

Colleges don't have a checklist of requirements when it comes to extracurriculars—they want to see your individuality—and your consistent commitment.

Haven't Gotten Involved Yet?

Lots of school, community, and religious organizations give you chances to explore your interests and talents. If you haven't felt drawn into something yet, there's no shortage of opportunities for you to explore.

School Activities

It's pretty easy to find out about activities available at school. Once you start exploring, sometimes the challenge is figuring out how much to do. Here are some quick tips:

- Most importantly, when you find something you like to do, stick with it.

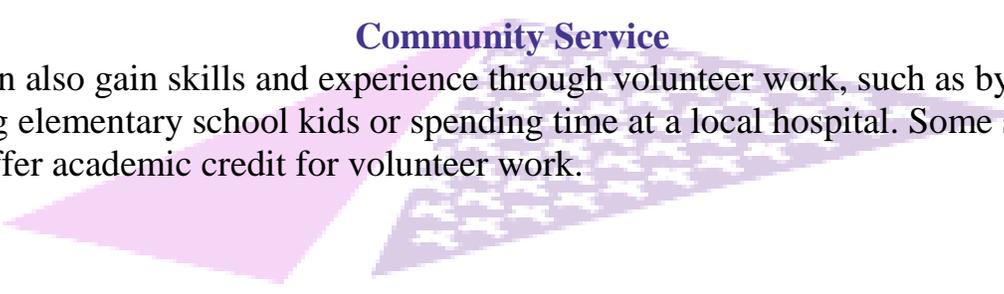
- If you're interested and have extra time, try to excel in more than one area. For example, write for the paper and volunteer. But make sure you're giving your all to each activity, and, most importantly, to your school work.
- Don't worry about being president, or captain. The key is whether you've done something significant, center stage or behind the scenes.

Work Experience

Work experience—paid or volunteer, year-round or summer—can help you identify career interests and goals, gain work experience, and apply classroom learning to the real world. It's also a great way to earn money for college, of course. Consider arranging for an internship or to shadow someone at his or her job.

Community Service

You can also gain skills and experience through volunteer work, such as by tutoring elementary school kids or spending time at a local hospital. Some schools even offer academic credit for volunteer work.



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