



EASTMAN  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

# 5 TIPS AS YOU PREPARE TO APPLY TO MUSIC SCHOOLS



Eastman School of Music Admissions Office





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# INTRODUCTION



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The music school application process is complex and has many components beyond the regular college application process. In short, a student applying to music school must do everything any college applicant must do (online application, letters of recommendation, personal statement, resume, etc.) *plus* the audition and possibly

even a pre-screening recording. This e-book is a guide for preparing for this process. We also encourage you to be in touch with the admissions offices of the schools you apply to. We always welcome the opportunity to talk with you in person. In the meantime, I wish you the best with your college search, and happy practicing!

# 1 WHAT IS THE RIGHT NUMBER OF SCHOOLS TO APPLY TO?

As high school students start their college search, the question often arises: how many schools should I apply to? What is the right number for your “short list”? The answer to this question is as individual as each student, but we would like to offer some guidance here that may be useful.



The **standard advice** is that seniors should apply to between six and eight schools. These applications, seniors are counseled, should fall into three categories:

- Two or three “reach” schools, which the applicant would like to attend, but where admission is not a sure thing due to higher selectivity
- Two or three “match” or “probable” schools, which are schools where it seems likely that the student will be admitted
- Two “safety” schools, where the student is nearly certain of being admitted

You’ve probably heard this advice before. However, it can be a bit bewildering for music students who can’t necessarily use grade point averages and test scores to gauge their chances of admission to any


# 1 RIGHT NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

**The quality of your audition is likely to have a bigger impact on your chances of being admitted.**

particular school. Grades and tests may be a factor, but the quality of your audition is likely to have a bigger impact on your chances of being admitted.

So, music students are left wondering “what are my chances?” and “what’s a safety, and what’s a reach?” At Eastman we frequently hear questions about how many openings will be available for a particular instrument in a given year. Unfortunately, these questions don’t help the student much. Even if you know that your first-choice school is looking to enroll X number of kazoo players (insert your instrument here), that still doesn’t tell you whether that means your chances are good. These numbers could even mislead you about your chances, and discourage you from applying to a school that could be a great fit for you. Top music schools receive applications from all over the world, and students don’t really have an effective way to judge how they compare on a national or international level—ultimately, that’s what the audition process is for!

Here are a few ideas that can help alleviate this problem:

1. Visit at least some of the colleges/conservatories that you are thinking of applying to. If you can **take a lesson** with a professor during your visit, set that up well in advance. During the lesson, ask if the professor thinks you are on the right track, or if there are specific things you should be working to improve as you prepare to audition. 



# 1 RIGHT NUMBER OF SCHOOLS



**Talk to your current music instructors about the schools you are considering.**

2. While on campus, **try to listen in on a rehearsal** or attend a concert so that you can hear the level of music-making going on at the school. (Keep in mind that you may be hearing upperclassmen or graduate students, so don't get spooked if that is the case!)
3. **Talk to current students** during your visit to get a feel for the campus culture. You can also ask about their admission experiences and why they decided to attend.
4. **Be as involved as possible** in the top musical groups in your area. For many students this means performing in youth orchestras, All-County, All-State, and the like. These types of activities are common among successful applicants to music schools, but keep in mind that getting into All-State ensembles does not automatically translate to acceptance at your preferred music school. ►

# 1 RIGHT NUMBER OF SCHOOLS



Keep looking for opportunities that will stretch you, including competitions, recitals, and professional gigs.

Talk to your current music instructors about the schools you are considering. They will likely be able to guide you and help to tailor your list.

Don't be too focused on the question of "where will I get in?" Instead, focus on creating a targeted list of schools which will offer the kinds of experiences that are most important to you—in other words, schools that will be a great fit for you. That might mean regular access to full-time resident faculty, small class sizes, lots of ensemble opportunities, a high-quality curriculum, a close-knit community of students, or any other number of factors that will shape your next four years.

So, this leads us back to the original question of how many schools to apply to. **For many music students, submitting between five and ten applications is a good number,** even if the schools on your list can't be easily categorized as "reaches," "matches," or "safeties." Applying to a much larger number of schools may seem like a tempting strategy to hedge your bets, but it can backfire if it leads you to spread yourself too thinly with applications and auditions. Ultimately the right number for you depends on how well you have done your research on each school, and your unique situation. However, I hope these suggestions provide some helpful guidance as you finalize your list. ▶



# 2 LOOKING AHEAD TO YOUR APPLICATIONS

Most applications are online, and will go live in early September, for applicants applying to enroll the following September. Even if you are a sophomore or junior in high school and your admissions cycle hasn't started yet, visit the admissions webpages of the schools on

## Read the instructions first.

your list and review the application process. Thinking now about what you will need to do during your senior year will help you to avoid surprises and pitfalls. Here is a quick guide to ensuring a relatively smooth application process:

**Read the instructions first.** The importance of this step can't be overstated. Every school you are applying to will have its own unique requirements, and you must read the instructions to know what is expected.

**Choose your preferred audition dates carefully, and mark them on your calendar before you submit your application.** If you successfully pass the pre-screening round (or if pre-screening is not required for your program) ▶





# 2 YOUR APPLICATIONS



## Talk to your recommenders early.

most schools will try to schedule your audition on your first or second choice date option if at all possible. Keep those dates open to prevent date conflicts. If a conflict comes up, let Admissions know right away, even if you are still awaiting pre-screening results.

**Talk to your recommenders early.** Most recommendation letters can now be submitted online. However, you should still contact each of your recommenders before adding their names to your application. It is a professional courtesy to ask first whether they are willing to write on your behalf, and they may need a helpful reminder about the great work you have done. Don't wait until the deadline is here to reach out to them. If you need to send them a reminder, you can often do that from your application status page after submitting your application.

**Requesting your transcript.** You can either scan and upload your transcripts within your application



# 2 YOUR APPLICATIONS

**Proofread and spell-check every document you submit.**

or send them by postal mail to the Office of Admissions. In either case you need to request them well in advance of the school's deadline to make sure they arrive on time.

**If a pre-screen recording is required for you, treat it like an audition.** Pre-screening is a preliminary round of auditions, and should be treated very seriously. Make sure your recording reflects your best performance ability, and that you are thoroughly prepared to record. While you do not necessarily need to go to a professional recording studio, you do want to be sure to use quality equipment to make your recording, and do it in a space that is free of background noise or distractions. If you don't own good recording equipment, consider borrowing some from a teacher or friend. Also be sure to test your recording files for quality before uploading them. Each selection should be recorded in a separate file, and each file can be no larger than 1GB in size. It's a good idea to have your teacher review your recording before you submit it.

**Proofread and spell-check every document you submit.** The resume and personal statement that you submit with your application are reflections of your writing skills. Take the time to spell-check them and proofread them, or better yet ask someone else to proofread.

**Make sure your name appears consistently on every document.** Make sure your name is written the same way on your application and on every



# 2 YOUR APPLICATIONS



## Keep it all in perspective.

document you submit. Consistency is key: if you put your legal name on your application but mail in additional documents under a nickname, it may be difficult for the Office of Admissions to match your items together. If your name has changed, please make sure that the Office of Admissions is aware of any former names to be watching for.

**Let Admissions know if you have questions.** We know that it is stressful trying to get everything completed by the application deadline. Keep it all in perspective, and remember that the people who work in admissions offices at the schools you are applying to are there to help you.



# RESUME GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE APPLICANTS

Regardless of whether or not applications have gone live, it's never too soon to begin crafting your resume. The following section will outline some guidelines to follow when creating a music-specific resume.

## General Notes:

- All items should be listed in reverse chronological order within their sections.
- Resumes should not exceed two pages.
- Keep font consistent.
- Print should be point size 12 or higher.

## Good fonts for a resume include:

Times New Roman

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Arial

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Helvetica

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# 3 MUSIC RESUME GUIDELINES

## SECTION I: Contact Information and Objective

*All students* should include on their resume:

- Your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and the program(s) to which you are applying

## SECTION II: Music-specific information and experience

*Applicants to all programs* should include the following:

- The name(s) of your current and most recent private teachers. Include the dates you studied with them, and their phone numbers and e-mail addresses, if known.
- A list of all music organizations with which you perform, and the dates of your participation. This can include school ensembles, youth organizations, and ad hoc ensembles you formed yourself.
- A list of any music competitions in which you participated and all related awards or recognition you have received while in high school, with dates indicated. This can include school, local, state, and national level awards.
- A list of any related experience, such as ensemble officer or manager, teaching, theatre or dance experience, or community service arts programs, that you feel completes the picture of you as a musician.





# 3 RESUME GUIDELINES

*Applicants to jazz programs* should list the following:

- Any classical training, listing teachers, program, duration and location
- Jazz ensemble experience (large ensemble/big band; small group/combo/chamber jazz)
- Other jazz instruments played (briefly describe level of playing proficiency)
- Jazz composition and arranging experience
- Jazz improvisation/theory/aural training (list courses and/or teachers)
- Jazz workshops, seminars, festivals, and summer camps in which you have participated
- Teaching experience, if any

## Section III: Non-Music information and experience

- A list of activities and awards related to academics, athletics, or leadership within your school or community
- A list of any community service in which you have participated
- A list of any work experience you have had while in school





# 4 ORGANIZING YOUR APPLICATION

Each music school to which you will apply will have its own set of requirements. When applying to five to ten different schools, it can be helpful to organize the items each school requires for its application. Keep in mind, each school will define a different set of materials

best suited to help determine whether or not you will be a good fit for that institution. For example, a music school with a strong non-music component in its curriculum may require you to submit a letter of reference from a non-music source, such as a physics teacher. Even though this letter may not be a requirement for other schools, it is usually important to the school requesting this particular letter.

Six to eight applications to different music schools means six to eight lists of audition repertoire for you to prepare. Consider laying out the entire required audition repertoire for all of the schools to which you are applying and identifying overlapping repertoire. For example, two different schools might both be asking applicants to prepare two contrasting movements from a Bach sonata. Checking the



# 4 ORGANIZING YOUR APPLICATION


repertoire in advance will allow you to prepare pieces that will work for multiple auditions. Color-coding or labeling repertoire that appears for multiple schools can also help you organize your audition plan.

The following chart is designed to help you organize all of the requirements for your music school applications. Fill it out carefully with the information from all of the schools to which you are applying, and use it to help prepare and learn the audition repertoire.

SCHOOL								
Final Deadline	Dec. 1							
Special Deadlines	Nov. 1							
Application Fee	\$125/\$75							
Fee Waiver	Yes							
Fee Waiver Deadline	Nov. 29							
Pre-Screening								
Online Upload / Mailing Address	Online							
Pre-Screening Repertoire								




# 4 ORGANIZING YOUR APPLICATION

SCHOOL	 EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER							
Personal Statement/Essay								
Essay 2								
Resume								
Transcripts								
Test Scores								
Recommender 1								
Recommender 2								
Recommender 3								



# 4 ORGANIZING YOUR APPLICATION

SCHOOL	 EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER							
Extras								
Extras								
Audition Date(s)								
Audition Repertoire								
Audition Day Forms								
Audition Day Forms 2								



# 5

## AUDITION CALENDAR

It is most preferable to audition in-person, if at all possible. Auditioning in person on the campuses of the music schools you are considering will typically permit you to be face-to-face with faculty members. Auditions conducted in person also allow for faculty

**Auditioning at multiple music schools will require you to be expertly organized.**

members to interact with you regarding your repertoire if necessary. Some might even provide some brief instruction which can be applied in real time.

Auditioning at multiple music schools will require you to be expertly organized when it comes to your schedule. Using a calendar early on can be an easy way to avoid double-booking and possible re-scheduling fees. Here are some things to consider when setting up your calendar:

- 1** Are there any major performances that you CANNOT miss during the months auditions are being held? Make note of senior recitals, All-State concerts, and major competitions you will not be willing to miss.
- 2** It might be helpful to highlight various audition day options for schools before selecting your first

# 5 AUDITION CALENDAR

and second choices or committing to a day. Seek out the specific options for your instrument. For example, a school may have auditions every Friday in February, but auditions for your instrument might only be held on three of the four Friday audition days.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>30</b> Audition Option for School A	<b>1</b> Audition Option for School B	<b>2</b> Audition Option for School B	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Audition Option for School C	<b>6</b> Audition Option for School D
	Option for School A	Option for School A				
<b>7</b> Audition Option for School D	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Audition Option for School C	<b>13</b>
					<i>All-State 8 am-7 pm</i>	





# 5 AUDITION CALENDAR

**3** When lining up different schools in one trip, be sure to note the travel time between schools. You should plan to be available for the entire duration of time the school requests of you, and you will also want to be realistic about how long it will take you to arrive at the next school.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>30</b> Requested Audition Date: School A	<b>1</b> Requested Audition Date: School B	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Audition Option for School C	<b>6</b> Requested Audition Date: School D
<b>Travel time to B: 2 hours</b>					<b>Travel time to D: 5 hours</b>	

**4** As audition dates are confirmed by each school, note any details that might be helpful when booking your travel and hotel arrangements. It is advisable not to book your flights or hotel until your audition date is confirmed.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>30</b> CONFIRMED Audition for School A Check-in at 10 AM out by 1 PM	<b>1</b> Requested Audition Date: School B	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> CONFIRMED Audition for School C Check-in at 9 AM out by 6 PM	<b>6</b> Requested Audition Date: School D
<b>Travel time to B: 2 hours</b>					<b>Travel time to D: 5 hours</b>	

# 5 AUDITION CALENDAR

5 If you find yourself double-booked or decide that you are no longer going to audition for a school, contact that school's Admissions Office as soon as possible. The later you wait to reach out, the less an Admissions Representative might be able to do to help you. If for example, you need to leave a little earlier to catch a flight, it will be easier to accommodate with advance notice.

On the following pages you will find a calendar outline that can be utilized to organize your music school auditions schedule.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday





# 5 AUDITION CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

# RESOURCES

- ▶ [Eastman School of Music](#)
- ▶ [Admissions Office web site](#)
- ▶ [Institute for Music Leadership](#)
- ▶ [E-Theory](#)
- ▶ [Speed Lessons](#)
- ▶ [ESM YouTube channel](#)
- ▶ [ESM Facebook page](#)
- ▶ [Fastweb.com](#)

