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How to develop a Passion



How do I develop a passion?

"I've heard that college admission people like to admit students that show that they have a passion about something." One parent and student told me.

A high school student wrote that he was worried about his burn-out and his lack of extracurricular activities.

This combination of passion and burn-out gets to the heart of a good college application strategy. Far too many students join clubs, compete in sports, and play instruments because they feel these activities are essential for getting into college, not because they actually have any passion for these extracurriculars. When you spend a lot of time doing something you don't love, you will burn out.

College applicants should think broadly about what can be defined as an extracurricular activity. Not everyone can be or wants to be class president, drum major, or the lead in the school play. And the truth is, unusual extracurricular activities are going to make your application stand out more than membership in Chess Club and Debate Team (mind you, Chess Club and Debate Team are both fine extracurriculars).

So the question is: How do I develop a passion and is it unique?

Develop a passion. This starts with what your interests, explore, learn research your interest. The greater your knowledge of your interest, the more passionate you will become. Remember my story about ice hockey. For my birthday I received some tickets to see the San Jose Sharks NHL team. At first I did not understand the rules and why the referee would stop the game play for what seemed like no apparent reason. I later learned the icing rule *"Icing in ice hockey occurs when a player shoots the puck across at least two red lines, the opposing team's goal line being the last, and the puck remains untouched."*

The more I learned about it the more I could appreciate it and my passion grew. The more you learn about the subject the greater your passion will become. Passion starts with interest.

So what are you interested in? Movies, books, sports, animals, cars, mountain biking...

Pick up a magazine on the topic. Browse the internet and search for your topic. Find other people who are interested in similar things.

Things that will really make your application jump are activities that the typical teenage is NOT involved with. While National Honor Society is good, hundreds of thousands of teenagers

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belong to this organization, as well as Key Club, Best Buddies and Yearbook. All these are good but are not stand out different.

Think about what will make me stand out and develop a passion around this. Ask yourself what makes me unique and different, what things do I like that are not typical teenage activities. Do you like the Rubik's Cube, want to build a sound studio in your home, did you start a lawn and garden care business?

Here's some ideas for **Unique Teen Activities**, what's your UTA?

1. **Create a Green program at your school, neighborhood or workplace** Besides going paperless, what other things could be done. Write up a report and give it to the principle or homeowners committee or boss. Then take action. Perhaps create a website promoting the topic for your local community.
2. **Start a business.** What talents do you have? Are you an expert at fixing computers, great at math or English and can tutor, professional dog walker or a wiz at creating web pages. You don't have to be the next Zuckerberg, but who knows maybe you can create an empire as well.
3. **Raise homing pigeons-** how many of your friends have homing pigeons? Probably none. Raise them, train, and compete. Create a web page or a special report that you could distribute to friends or even the news paper.
4. **Start a recycling program in your community-** work with city officials, not just other teens. In order to make this an UTA it needs to be organized. Other teens could volunteer to participate, but make sure you have some adult participation as well.
5. **Conduct scientific research-** learn some basic analysis skill from your biology or chemistry class and conduct an organized research effort in your area. If you design your study to give insight to a local problem you will garner local interest in the community and perhaps get written up in the paper or appear as a guest on local TV or radio. For instance, you might research the impact that global warming has had on the species of plants that will grow in local gardens. Or, perhaps you can design a study to track effective mosquito-control techniques that safely work on the local mosquito populations. Feel free to enlist other teens to help you do the research, but be sure that the project has some adult oversight and participation to ensure that the results get taken seriously. Try proposing your project to the local government and asking them to support the research with a small budget. Obtaining even a small grant will elevate your UTA in the eyes of the college.



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6. **Write for your hometown newspaper**- find a local “beat” in which you have expertise and write-up a few sample articles or opinion columns. Present the material to your local newspaper and offer to do a regular story for them. Be prepared to commit to a certain number of issues and stick to the schedule no matter what.
7. **Manage a rock band**- lots of teenagers start rock bands, but few teenagers are rock band managers. Managing a rock band requires the development of a number of skills including money management, negotiation, marketing, people management and a variety of legal issues. A good manager can manage several bands at a time. You can organize gigs and shows in your area.
8. **Play the stock market**- opening a trading account and learning about investing is not complicated, but few, if any, teenagers do it. You’ll have to save money from your part-time job or allowance to get the account started, but the time you invest will pay big dividends for getting into college (and paying for it).
9. **Buy some real estate**- you don’t have to be wealthy to buy and manage rental property. You may be able to raise the down payment through a summer job. You will have to advertise to find a tenant and maintain the property. You will develop an invaluable set of skills that many Americans don’t even get exposed to until their late twenties or thirties. You will have a very impressive essay.
10. **Invent something and apply for a patent**- come up with a new product or even a process for doing something better and you might have a unique invention. Enlist some adults to help you develop a prototype and apply for a patent. You don’t have to hire a lawyer (although you may find one who is liberal with the free advice because you will impress them); you can complete the patent paperwork yourself. It is a big, big job and it will probably get rejected by the US Patent Office, but in the process will teach you a lot about how the patent system works. If your product is a good one you may find a company to produce it and pay you a royalty. Your experience will make a great essay.
11. **Run for public office**- get your hands on the local city code and see what offices are available. Your age may not prevent you for running for city counselor even mayor. You will have to raise money for your campaign, organize your political platform and conduct your campaign. Even if you don’t win you will have an incredible NTA. If you do win you will have to take the job and learn about your local government. Being an elected official is probably not a full-time job, but you will have to forgo a few extracurricular in order to find the time.
12. **Swim the English Channel**- you may never be in better shape in your life. If you are a swimmer and you dare make the 21-mile swim, you will not only be the talk of the

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town, but also you'll be the talk of the admissions department. You'll need to work with the right people to make it happen and, of course, train like crazy. If you can't afford the trip why not use the opportunity to raise money for charity.

13. **Write and publish a book-** While there have been some teenaged authors, it would help if your passion and potential major is literature and writing. Enter a short story contest or publish poetry. Who knows you might be the next Mary Shelley (she wrote and published *Frankenstein* when she was 19.)

14. **Create a club or charity in your community or school-** One student's 'passion' of hunting for free things on the internet turned into a cause. This student collected toiletries, boxes and textbooks and novels, and free food and donated them to several charitable causes. This student then created a Freebie Club at the high school, collect items and donate them to chosen charities. This activity looks good on a college application for several reasons: it's unusual, it helps people, and it demonstrates the student's creativity and initiative.

15. **Take your ideas one step further.** The student could take this club one step further to accomplish the dual goals of getting into college and helping others -- how about using the club to fund-raise for a charity? Perhaps create a competition for your club or interest; collect donations; get sponsors -- use the club to raise money and awareness for a worthy cause.

Use these ideas as a starting point to jump off and explore new and different activities. After you have developed your passion contact the local news paper or TV stations and see if you can get interviewed. TV and radio love to interview kids who have done something special.

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What are you interested in?

When you are not doing school work, what can we find you doing?

What hobbies do you have and enjoy?

What kinds of things do you research online and offline?

My passion, my different and uniqueness is and/or my interest is:

Find your dream and follow your passion!