

5 Keys to Unlock the Waitlist Lock

Being wait-listed is tough, and you need the right set of keys to open the door to your dream program. The truth is that even with these keys, it's still not guaranteed that the lock will work. But this keychain has the critical pieces of metal you'll need to turn that lock. First, a word of introduction: Realize that receiving a wait-list letter means you qualify for admission. You pass. You are probably on the wait-list (and not admitted) because they have already admitted applicants with your profile and want diversity in the class. Or they find your qualifications impressive, but find someone else's even more so. Now let's examine that keychain. Key 1: Read the letter for any hints of deficiency in your profile and attempt to improve that element in your profile. Key 2: Give them more reasons to admit you. If the school encouraged contact, inform it of new achievements, initiatives, promotions, and developments in your life. This suggestion implies developing a proactive campaign for contact roughly every 2-3 weeks. The exact particulars will vary depending on your school, specialty, and exactly when you are put on the wait list, but it can include letters, additional visit(s) to the school, an offer to interview, letters of support from others, and occasional phone calls. Letters should be 1-2 pages. For tips on the letters' content, please see "Wait-list Purgatory." Key 3: Reinforce the idea of a fit between you and the school. Demonstrate how a visit confirmed and deepened your interest in the program. Show how recent activities reveal that your values and the school's are a match made in heaven. Key 4: Enlist your fan club. Seek additional letters of recommendation from supervisors on and off the job and professors (if applying to an academic program). Current students and recent alumni who know you can also write letters of support and emphasize your fit with the program. Key 5: Ask if there is anything you can do to improve your candidacy. There usually isn't, but if there is you want to know about it and do it. If you have already demonstrated improvement in that aspect of your profile, let them know how you have improved since you applied. It is much harder to wave the flag when the school doesn't want contact. But even in these cases, you can be proactive, just more indirect. If feasible, visit the school and take a tour. If you know alumni or faculty members, ask them to put in a good word for you at the school. You can't be responsible if your fan club thinks you belong at School X and wants to inform the admissions committee. You will have to be a little more indirect, but you still want someone to show fit and that "new and improved" you. For must-have information on the wait-list process, read "Nine Mistakes You Don't Want to Make on an MBA Waitlist." Editors are available to help you evaluate your application, advise you on your wait-list strategy, and edit wait-list letters. For more information, please visit our catalog.

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