

mbaMission

Stuck In The Middle With You: Strategies for Getting off the Waitlist

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Getting Off the Waitlist

1. What does the Waitlist Even Mean?
2. The Nuances of Waitlist Management
3. What Next?
4. About mbaMission and Q&A

Section 1:

What Does the Waitlist Even Mean?

What Does the Waitlist Mean?

*“Trying to make some sense of it all,
But I can see that it makes no sense at all,
Is it cool to go to sleep on the floor,
'Cause I don't think that I can take anymore
Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right,
Here I am, stuck in the middle with you...”*
- Stealers Wheels, Stuck in the Middle with You

“The frontier between hell and heaven is only the difference between two ways of looking at things.”
- George Bernard Shaw

What Does the Waitlist Mean?

Does the Waitlist Mean that I am Not Good Enough?

- If you were not a good enough applicant, they would just reject you
- The admissions committee doesn't have time to play games – and why would they anyway?
- AdComs have the luxury of keeping their options open
- The point of the waitlist is that you are admissible!

What Does the Waitlist Mean?

Does the Waitlist Mean that I am Not Good Enough?

- “Since Tuck puts very few people on the waitlist, you should view this as a positive response.”
— Dartmouth Tuck admissions committee
- “We find that your strengths and accomplishments stand out amongst the majority of our applicants.”
— Berkeley Haas admissions committee
- “The waitpool is a group of hand-selected applicants who are very strong candidates for admission for the current year. It is not a consolation prize or an empty courtesy. Rather, we select applicants whom we wish to see in the class.”
— Stanford GSB admissions committee
- “The admissions committee feels that you will be a fit with our unique, inquisitive and supportive community here at Chicago Booth.”
— Chicago Booth admissions committee

What Does the Waitlist Mean?

Seriously, I have No Chance of Getting in, Right?

- “We selected approximately 80 candidates for the waitpool. In the past five years, we have had waitpools ranging from 75 to more than 200 people. Some years we are able to admit a high percentage of those placed in the waitpool; some years that percentage is zero. It varies so dramatically each year — based on a host of ever-changing factors — that historical statistics are misleading.”
— Stanford GSB admissions committee
- “The number of admissions offers extended to waitlist candidates varies widely from year to year, and is very difficult to predict. Historically, anywhere between 50-60 candidates have been admitted off the waitlist in a given year.”
— Harvard Business School admissions committee
- “We will likely have between 100 and 200 active candidates on the waiting list.”
— MIT-Sloan admissions committee

What Does the Waitlist Mean?

Seriously, I have No Chance of Getting in, Right?

- “We do anticipate admitting candidates from the waitlist. The applicant pool varies each year, and therefore we cannot predict exactly how many applicants will be offered admission or your specific chances of being offered a seat in the class. We do not provide historical data on either the numbers or percentages of applicants admitted off the waitlist from previous years.”
— Northwestern-Kellogg admissions committee
- “Please be advised that the Admissions Committee has made a conscious decision to limit the number of applicants extended a place on the waitlist.”
— Duke-Fuqua admissions committee
- “...the number of applicants on the waitlist varies throughout the admissions cycle. There is no pre-determined number of waitlisted applicants.”
— NYU-Stern admissions committee

What Does the Waitlist Mean?

Where Do I Rank on this List?

- “Our waitlist is not ranked and unfortunately there is no extra information we can give you about your chances of admission.”
 - London Business School admissions committee
- “The waitlist is not ranked.”
 - Duke-Fuqua admissions committee
- “Candidates on our waitlist are not ranked.”
 - Northwestern-Kellogg admissions committee
- “No, the list is not ranked. *If space becomes available in the incoming class, the Admissions Committee will review the applications of waitlisted students in the context of the overall composition of the class.*”
 - Michigan-Ross admissions committee

Section 2:

The Nuances of Waitlist Management

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Waitlist Management 101

- Silence is not golden; shouting is not rewarded!
- Don't take a one-size fits all approach
- Be thoughtful in all of your correspondence
- Project confidence in all interactions: don't panic, beg, plead, call repeatedly, etc.
- Be honest with yourself about weaknesses
 - Test scores
 - Quant abilities
 - Recommendations
 - Professional/Academic info: refined goals or expression of interest
 - Extra-curricular engagement

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Open: Send Us Critical Information Only!

- “Waitlisted applicants may provide one update per decision round letting us know of significant changes since your application was submitted (e.g., job change, promotion, award). This update should be submitted online. Aside from a new GMAT, GRE or TOEFL score, which may be submitted at any time while you are on the waitlist, this will be your only opportunity to submit an update.”
 - Michigan Ross admissions committee
- “For many applicants we require no specific information, but general updates may be provided. Suitable information for an update includes job changes or promotions, new extracurricular involvement, an updated test score or changes in your personal situation that the Admissions Committee should be aware of.”
 - Northwestern Kellogg admissions committee
- “New information should be submitted only when it provides a different or updated perspective to the Admissions Committee.”
 - NYU-Stern admissions committee

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Open: The Unique Case of Chicago Booth

Updates, Materials, and Video

We welcome you to submit relevant updates in the form of an optional 300-word essay or a 45-second waitlist video that addresses one of the following questions:

- Why Booth?
- Why is now the right time for you to pursue your MBA?
- What are your goals post-MBA, and how will an MBA help you accomplish them?

Ideally, the materials you provide should add insight into your qualifications and strength of fit with Chicago Booth beyond what was presented in your original application, so we encourage you to perform a thorough audit of your application and think about ways in which you can add value for the Admissions Committee.

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Wide Open (!): Delighted to Hear from You!

- “You are welcome to e-mail additional materials (e.g., letter of interest, additional essay) to mba.waitlist@yale.edu.”
— Yale SOM admissions committee
- “...common areas to address to help enhance your candidacy; not every suggestion will be relevant to each candidate. Focus on substantive, meaningful improvements that you feel will make you a stronger candidate or provide information not already presented in your application.”
—Berkeley-Haas admissions committee
- “We encourage waiting list applicants to keep us updated on their situation and intentions. You are welcome to submit via e-mail only any additional information you feel will be helpful to us.”
—MIT-Sloan admissions committee

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Open Waitlists: Advocacy, Not a Campaign!

- 1-3 correspondences, depending on time on the waitlist and the school's messaging
- 1-2 letters of recommendation, depending on time on the waitlist, the school's messaging. Must provide new information!
- Update with significant achievements and/or general
 - GMAT improvement
 - Promotion or significant professional success
 - Awards
 - Professional/Academic info: refined goals or firsthand experiences with the institution
 - Achievements in the personal or professional sphere

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Open Waitlists: Advocacy, Not a Campaign!

Dear Mr. Smith,

Since receiving my waitlist decision one month ago, I have determinedly continued to learn more about the ABC School to be best prepared to join the class, should the opportunity arise. Last week, I visited campus, eager to experience a case discussion firsthand. I admittedly did not expect the manic energy and humor that Professor Paul Johnson brought to the “Finance II” class, but amid his sprints to the board and rapid-fire questioning of the unsuspecting, I learned a profound lesson on the connection between inventory management and working capital needs. I was sold on the case method before my visit, but my experience with the Clarkson Lumber case only reinforced that this is the ideal active learning style for me. I should add that I was fortunate to join the learning team of my former colleague Mary Flanagan (a fellow McKinsey alumna) that evening and observed the team dissect the next day’s cases. Seeing her engaged in such a collaborative learning environment made me certain that I would be a solid fit both academically and socially.

Nuances of Waitlist Management

When I submitted my application, I was about to begin a new case at McKinsey. Today, three months later, this project is quickly moving forward. At McKinsey, I previously worked exclusively on due diligence assessments for private equity firms; I recently asked to join a strategic review and am now evaluating potential divestitures for a media firm. As I study this firm, I find that I am fascinated by the mix of old media and new media assets and by the nebulous nature of making decisions on assets whose prices seem to change each day. I have repeatedly met with the firm's CFO and its vice president for strategic planning, and we have now determined which assets are "non-core" and are considering options, including selling such expendable assets to competitors or to one of the private equity firms for which I completed a due diligence project. In fact, I was quite proud to have made an introduction for my client to a private equity firm myself. This new experience has been invigorating and has only reinforced my desire to return to McKinsey after completing my MBA, as discussed in depth in my personal statement.

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Despite my busy schedule, I remain committed to the Golden Heights Senior Center, where I lead Bingo each Sunday and play in the “house band” each Wednesday night. Last month, I also organized a weekend trip for 20 seniors to the Super Casino and arranged to play Bingo there and attend an instrumental show with an acoustic Beatles tribute band. Needless to write, perhaps, it was an experience that none of us will forget.

I remain committed to attending your program and am optimistic that I will find a place in your class. I will continue to apprise the admissions committee of my progress and remain available should you have any questions at all.

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Open Waitlists: Advocacy, Not a Campaign!

Dear Mr. Smith,

Following up on my update of March 1, 2015, I am writing briefly to notify the admissions committee of two material changes in my candidacy. First, two weeks ago, I completed my “Calculus I” and “Statistics I” classes at the HIJ University Extension School, and yesterday morning, my professors informed me that I earned As in both of their classes. Even though I work in a highly analytical capacity at McKinsey, as a liberal arts major, I felt it important to clearly establish my quantitative competencies, and I am hoping that my As in these recent courses will do so. As soon as my final grades and transcript are available, I will send official copies for your records.

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Open Waitlists: Advocacy, Not a Campaign!

Second, I am excited to report that I took the GMAT for a second time and earned a slightly higher score, a 710. What is noteworthy is that my Quantitative score rose from a 79th percentile to an 85th percentile—which I believe serves as further proof of my quant skills and my ability to make contributions in this area. Again, I will follow up shortly by sending my official GMAT score report.

Moreover, I have continued my networking and recently had lunch with David Clarke, ABC MBA '67, who is a partner at McKinsey. I was impressed that all these years later, Mr. Clarke is still active with the alumni association and in touch with, by his estimation, no less than 30 members of his class of 240. In addition to my belief in the case study method, I feel that working closely with my peers and developing enduring relationships is very important. I saw this on display when I visited a class and a learning team meeting with Mary Flanagan last month, and Mr. Clarke's enthusiasm for the school and anecdotes about his class only reinforced my feeling that ABC School is the ideal place for me to live and learn for two years and one I will continue to "experience" throughout my life.

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Closed: Don't Call Us, We'll Call You!

- “It is appropriate for you to reaffirm your interest in Stanford by uploading a brief letter in the Next Steps section of your online application. Other than the brief letter reaffirming your interest, we neither request nor suggest additional submissions.”
—Stanford GSB admissions committee
- “HBS is fully committed to the online application process. Our decision will be based upon a continued review of the completed application materials you have already submitted. If we need additional information from you as we make a decision on your candidacy, we will contact you.”
—Harvard Business School admissions committee

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Closed: Less is Way More!

- Arms length recommendation that is particularly thoughtful
 - 99% of all cases, just one letter
 - New info or perspective
 - Highly placed alum can help
- Short update with significant achievement
 - GMAT improvement, completion of quant courses
 - Promotion or massive professional success
 - Awards

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Closed: Short and Sweet

“I am writing with a brief update which you will hopefully regard as material to my candidacy. I recently took the GMAT for a second time and was able to raise my quantitative raw score from 46 to 48; meanwhile, my overall score increased from a 700 to a 720. I hope that my 48 raw score will alleviate any concerns that may have existed due to my academic background in English literature.

Additionally, I am pleased to let you know that I have been promoted to Vice-President from Assistant Vice-President and my team has expanded from three direct reports to nine. I have always been completely transparent about my MBA ambitions, which makes my firm’s decision to particularly gratifying. Instead of my firm turning its back on me, they are promoting me with the hope that I will stay. However, I have told them that should I get off the HBS waitlist, I will definitely be taking my place in the class.”

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Should I use a Little Force?

- “Wharton’s Waitlist Policy is designed to create an admissions process that is fair and equitable for all candidates. Please do not feel pressured to express your continued interest in Wharton while on the waitlist; we assume that by virtue of the fact that you have spent considerable time and effort to apply to Wharton, you are still interested in our program. In that same spirit of ensuring a fair process for all candidates, we do not offer feedback to candidates on our waitlist, either.”
— Wharton admissions committee
- “Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate requests for an individual appointment with a Board member.”
— Harvard Business School admissions committee
- “Admissions Officers are not available to meet in person. We maintain this policy out of fairness to all applicants...”
— Northwestern-Kellogg admissions committee

Section 3:

What Next?

Nuances of Waitlist Management

Buckle in for a long ride...

- Some decisions will be made on a rolling basis
- Some decisions will be made with R3
- Some decisions will be made after R3 is done and classes take shape
- Some decisions will be made a week before an MBA program starts
- Some decisions will be made a week into an MBA program

Nuances of Waitlist Management

What if I Wait and Wait and Get Dinged?

- Some schools will give waitlisted applicants feedback
- The schools have reapplication processes for a reason: “See you next fall” letter!
- Stay active in all activities and strive to improve where possible
- Honestly assess your candidacy. Some common problems...
 - Quant abilities are borderline
 - GMAT score lower than average
 - Goals are unclear
 - Reason for attending particular school are unclear
 - Extras are weak
 - Quant abilities

Section 4:

About mbaMission/Q&A

About mbaMission

About mbaMission

- Only MBA Admissions Consulting Firm with Full-Time Consultants
- Unprecedented Collaboration Among the mbaMission Team
- Select Just 1% from Applicant Pool of Elite MBAs (and Then Conduct Constant, Ongoing Training!)
- Already Working for You—Events, Guides, and More
- Highest-Rated Firm on GMAT Club by 100 Verified Reviews
- Only Admissions Consulting Firm Recommended by MGMAT

About mbaMission

Many Opportunities to Try Us ...

- Session 10
- mbaMission Complete Start-to-Finish Admissions Guide
- mbaMission Insider's Guides
- Additional mbaMission Events
- MBA Career Coaches Free Guides
- M7 Financial Free Student Loan Guide and MBA Credit Reports
- Free 30-Minute Consultation with an mbaMission Senior Consultant

About mbaMission

mbaMission Services

- Complete “Start-to-Finish” Package
- A La Carte Hourly Services
- mbaMission Application Boot Camp
- Mock Interview Sessions
- Wharton Team-Based Discussion Simulation
- Pre-Application Strategy

mbaMission: Our Team (Selected Members)

- **Jeremy Shinewald** – UVA Darden, Ambassadorial Speechwriter, *Complete Start-to-Finish MBA Admissions Guide*
- **Katharine Lewis** – HBS/HLS, McKinsey & Company, former Stanford admissions reader
- **Monica Carpenter-Okrah** – HBS, JP Morgan, *65 Successful Harvard Business School Application Essays*
- **Lynn Moloney** – HBS, former managing editor: *Fast Company & Inc.* magazines
- **Rachel Beck** – CBS, award-winning business reporter: The Associated Press
- **Kevin Shen** – Stanford BA, MA; Wharton MBA, Wharton admissions committee
- **Adam Grossman** – NYU Stern, The Huron Consulting Group, *The Elusive Fan: Reinventing Sports in a Crowded Marketplace*
- **Susan Kaplan** – Yale SOM, director of corporate marketing: National Hockey League

The mbaMission Family

For more than a decade, our family of companies has been supporting the unique aspirations of graduate school candidates, students, and professionals, ensuring that our clients succeed in achieving their educational, professional and personal ambitions.

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 - Free Career Primers – Consulting, Investment Banking, Marketing, Private Equity, Venture Capital
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 - Free Graduate Program Credit Ratings
 - Free Student Loan (Reduction) Primer
 - <http://www.m7financial.com/resources/>
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 - Free consultation: <http://www.jdmission.com/consult.php>

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