

Kaplan Test Prep Survey: Social Media Checks By College Admissions Officers Decline Due to Savvier Applicants and Shifting Attitudes

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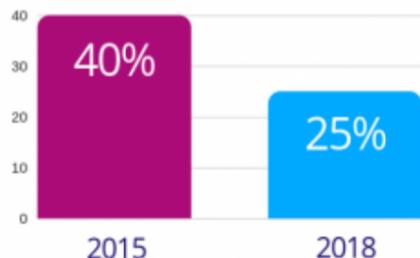
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Kaplan Survey: Fewer Admissions Officers Are Checking Applicants' Social Media Profiles

For the third year in a row, the percentage of college admissions officers who visit applicants' social media profiles to learn more about them has declined. Contributing reasons? (A) They can't find them, and (B) privacy concerns are rising.¹

Have you ever visited an applicant's social media page to learn more about them?



About 85% of teens say they use Instagram and Snapchat, where it's easier to protect their privacy, at least once a month, compared to just 36% who use Facebook once a month.²

Do you agree it's "fair game" to check social media profiles to help make admissions decisions?



Students have been generally more accepting of the practice than admissions officers; in a Kaplan survey released earlier this year, 70% of students said it's "fair game" to check social media.³

1. Kaplan Test Prep phone survey of 364 admissions officers from top US colleges and universities (as ranked by U.S. News & World Report) conducted Jul-Aug 2018.
2. Piper Jaffray report: "Taking Stock With Teens"
3. Kaplan Test Prep email survey of 914 high school students who prepared for the SAT®, ACT®, or PSAT® with a Kaplan course between Oct 2017 and Feb 2018.



(November 27, 2018) — A new Kaplan Test Prep survey finds that for the third year in a row, the percentage of college admissions officers who visit applicants' social media profiles to learn more about them has declined, with only a quarter (25 percent) saying they do so, down from a high of 40 percent in 2015*. One possible contributing reason? They can't find them.

Of the admissions officers who say they have visited applicants' social media profiles, a majority (52 percent) say that students have become savvier about hiding their social media presence over the past few years or moving away from social communities where what they post is easy to find by people they don't know. [According to a 2018 report by research firm Piper Jaffray](#), about 85 percent of teens say they use both Instagram and Snapchat — two platforms which make it easy to share posts with people you want and hard to find for people you don't — at least once per month. This compares to just 36 percent of teens who use Facebook once per month, a decrease from 60 percent two years ago.

Another factor may be a shift in attitudes about checking social media. While 57 percent say that it's "fair game" for them to visit applicants' social media profiles like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to help them decide who gets in, it represents a significant drop from the 68 percent who held this view in Kaplan's 2017 survey. Notably, students have been generally more accepting of this practice than admissions officers; in a separate Kaplan survey completed earlier this year, 70 percent said they believe it's "fair game" for admissions officers to check social media.

As one admissions officers stated, "Unless it's a matter of checking on something that might be a hate crime or endangering other people, then it becomes a safety issue, but otherwise it's a privacy issue."

Yariv Alpher, Kaplan Test Prep's executive director of research, who has been tracking this issue for a number of years, thinks many factors explain the change of attitude and practice in admissions officers. "We're seeing the result of combining trends here. On the one hand, students are savvier. They are more careful with what they post and are increasingly using more private social networks. In some cases they also create fake accounts that they only share with friends, but which are not easily attributed to them. On the other hand, admissions officers are increasingly conscious of the need to maintain students' privacy, and are more inclined to use social media in a more targeted way. Regardless, social media remains an admissions factor for a significant number of colleges, so students should be mindful of what they share."

Alpher continues to advise students to be thoughtful about what they post, like making a snap decision and posting an opinion that others may find offensive. He also cautions about spending weeks on perfecting a video library on YouTube in the hopes that admissions officers will organically come across it — he suggests applicants call it out to them instead. "Even as technology has allowed college admissions officers to discover more information about their prospective students, it seems they are sticking with the traditional elements of the application to help them make enrollment decisions, like standardized test scores, GPA, letters of recommendation, and personal statements. These factors overwhelmingly decide applicants' paths. Social media remains a wildcard, though from our research, a somewhat diminishing one. We'll be tracking to see if this trend continues or reverses."

To speak with a college admissions expert at Kaplan Test Prep, please contact Russell Schaffer at russell.schaffer@kaplan.com or 212.453.7538.

Kaplan Test Prep's 2018 college admissions officers survey finds that 25 percent of them visit applicants' social pages to learn more about them, a decline from 40 percent three years ago.

**364 admissions officers from the nation's top national, regional and liberal arts colleges and universities – as compiled from U.S. News & World Report – were polled by telephone between July and August 2018.*

About Kaplan Test Prep

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