

Parent Quiz: What Kind of Helicopter Are You?

The term “helicopter parents” typically refers to parents who are intensely involved in their child’s college search. But other types of helicopter parents exist, too. Answer these questions to see which kind of helicopter you might be.

1. Your child has an interview with the admissions dean at a potential college. You:

- A. Offer to ask sample interview questions and help with transportation.
- B. Sit next to your child during the interview and answer questions.
- C. Tell stories from your college days.
- D. Ride up to campus and take in a football game during the interview.

2. The deadline for the college application essay is approaching. You:

- A. Offer to proofread for spelling and grammar.
- B. Write the essay.
- C. Proofread, adding in a few paragraphs of your own because you are familiar with both the college and your child.
- D. Point out that there are pencils in the desk drawer.

3. The best college for your child is:

- A. Whichever school offers my child a chance to succeed in a comfortable yet challenging environment.
- B. Harvard.
- C. My alma mater.
- D. Whichever, as long as we can afford it.

4. When do you think it is best to call the counselor at your school:

- A. When the process appears to be stalled and deadlines are approaching.
- B. Daily.
- C. Whenever they suggest schools I don’t approve of.
- D. I need the counselor’s name.

5. Discussions about paying for college include:

- A. You provide your student with need-to-know information about expected family contributions and cost constraints, but allow your student to make final decisions.
- B. You plan to complete the financial aid and scholarship applications without your child’s knowledge.
- C. Your child has no say in this process. You are the only voice to be heard or followed.
- D. You change the topic every time your child asks about family involvement in paying for college.

6. When college information arrives in the mail what do you do?

- A. Place it with other college mail on the child’s desk.
- B. See which schools look promising, look them up online, request applications.
- C. Sort it, dropping unknown or unwanted colleges in the trash.
- D. Drop it on the kitchen table.

7. Should you call the college president’s office to discuss your student’s application?

- A. No.
- B. Calls should be frequent.
- C. I donate money to the alumni club. I can talk to the president if I want.
- D. What application?

8. What college search activities have you scheduled for your child?

- A. Low-pressure chats about what my child needs, what we can afford and what might be a good fit.
- B. A 12-state, 54-school summer road trip. We’ll hit Harvard twice.
- C. A tour of your former dorm.
- D. Watching college football on Saturdays.

If you answered mostly D’s: Air Ambulance
 You’re only around in life-threatening situations. During the college search your child will need your help and guidance. Get involved. If you don’t know where to start, start small. Talk with your child about what he or she enjoys about high school, and what he or she might want to do afterwards.

If you answered mostly C’s: Police Chopper
 You enforce your college views on your child. You lay down the law making demands about where your child can apply and what’s best. Have you thrown away brochures from schools because they’re not on your list? Painted your living room the colors of your alma mater? The best college for you may not be the best for your child. Let your student’s needs and desires dictate the college search.

If you answered mostly B’s: Apache Helicopter
 Aggressive and forceful, your actions can cause collateral damage that can negatively impact your child’s college search. It’s good to be involved, but you need to give your child some space and let him or her take charge of the college search. Your child should write his or her own essay, ask questions on college tours and be the only one to interview with the college. Do not call the college and ask to speak to the president.

If you answered mostly A’s: Kiowa Recon Helicopter
 You play a supporting role providing information about the road ahead. You scout out potential pitfalls, and make sure your child is prepared for what lies ahead. You provide prep materials, deadline reminders and encouragement.

