

## Applying Sideways [by Chris Peterson SM '13](#)

### How to get into MIT

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横向申请

如何进入麻省理工学院

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每年秋天，就像从树枝上纷纷坠落的叶片一般，大学招生官们随着秋风去到全国的各个角落，和高中生们谈话并且推销他们的大学。

Every fall, like leaves tumbling exhausted from branches, admissions officers follow the winds to the corners of the country to talk to students and hawk their school.

我最近刚从一趟行程回来，短短几天去了北卡罗莱纳州洛利、乔治亚州亚特兰大、和其间十几个不同的地方。我拜访了大型高中和小型高中、城市和村镇，并且在亚特兰大的一座大礼堂中完成了一场上千人的麻省理工学院“造势”说明会。

I recently returned from my travel, which took me from Raleigh, North Carolina to Atlanta, Georgia and a dozen places in between over the course of a few days. I visited big high schools and small high schools, cities and villages, and performed what amounted to a thousand-person MIT revival in an Atlanta auditorium.

每当我和学生或是他们的家人们说话时，不论是在旅行的途中或是在校园的说明会中，毫无疑问地我一定会被问到一个相同的问题。

Whenever I speak to students or their families, be it on travel or during a campus information session, without fail I am asked the same question.

这个问题有很多种不同的问法。“你想要在申请人身上看到什么？”有些人这么问。“要怎么样才能从众多申请人中脱颖而出？”其他人这么问。

This question may take many forms. What is it that you look for in an applicant?, some say. What makes someone stand out in your pool?, others ask.

然而这些不同的版本—还有数不清的其他的版本—其实都是同一个问题的翻版，那就是：

“我如何可以进入麻省理工学院？”

But these variants – and countless others – are all just versions of the same question, which is this: *How do I get into MIT?*

这是我告诉他们的：

“横向申请。”

And here is what I tell them:

**Apply sideways.**

让我分解这个答案。

Let me unpack that.

当人们问我这个问题时，通常是因为他们想要进入麻省理工学院上学，而且要我告诉他们一些做了之后可以令他们顺利被录取的事情。也许他们需要做到鹰级童子军和总平均成绩4.0。或是打鼓专业和学测满分2400。或是他们需要在高中毕业前解出一道开放数学问题千年难题或是找到癌症的治愈方法。“只要告诉我需要做些什么，”他们双眼征询着，“我会像雷·路易斯(史上最佳橄榄球线卫)掰倒那些最容易受攻击的对手般，勇猛、矫捷、精准地对付清单上的每一个项目。”

When folks ask me this question, it is generally because they want to come to MIT, and they want me to tell them something they can do that will get them in. Maybe they need to be an Eagle Scout with a 4.0. Or a drum major with a 2400. Maybe they need to solve an open math problem or cure cancer before graduating high school. *Just tell me what I need to do*, their eyes implore, *and I will attack each line item on the list like Ray Lewis cleaning a wideout's clock on a slant route over the middle.*

很恐怖对吗？是的。一定要做到这些才能被麻省理工学院录取吗？不是。  
*Terrifying? Yes. Required to be accepted to MIT? No.*

但是这件事情不是像这样的。

因为以下这才是你所需要了解的：

“没有哪一件事，真的，没有任何一件事，是可以因为这件事情的本身而令你被麻省理工学院录取的。”

比方说，几年前，我们没有录取一位在他家车房造出一座具备完整功能的核子反应炉的学生。花一秒钟想想这个事实。

But it doesn't work that way. Because here's what you need to understand: **There is nothing, literally nothing, that in and of itself will get you in to MIT.**

For example: A few years ago, we did not admit a student who had created a fully-functional nuclear reactor in his garage. Think about that for a second.

大部分的学生们，当我告诉他们这个故事时，都会变得非常沮丧。毕竟，如果连一个能搭出一座“惊悚”的核子反应炉的孩子都不能被麻省理工学院录取，那他们还有什么机会？然而他们把事情弄颠倒了。事实上，这个故事对于大部分的学生而言应该是无比“鼓舞人心”的。这应该是彻底的“解脱”。为什么？因为在同一年麻省理工学院录取了超过一千多名其他的学生，其中没有任何一个人搭出了核子反应炉！

Now, most students, when I tell them this story, become depressed. After all, if the kid who built a *freakin' nuclear reactor* didn't get in to MIT, what chance do they have?

But **they have it backwards**. In fact, this story should be incredibly **encouraging** for most students. It should be **liberating**. Why?

Because over a thousand other students **were** admitted to MIT that year, and none of them built a nuclear reactor!

我的意思不是要劝阻学生们各自去从事令人惊艳的科学技术研究。如果你想做，去做！但是绝对不要因为你觉得这是进入麻省理工学院的门票而去做。并且，对于每一件你所做的事都应该如此——课程、学测(SATs)、和课外活动。

没有黄金通关卡。

所以，松口气。

I don't mean to discourage anything from pursuing incredible science and technology research on their own. If you want to do it, DO IT. But don't do it because you think it's your ticket to MIT. And that applies to everything you do – classes, SATs, extracurriculars. There is no golden ticket. So breathe.

现在你可以老僧入定般的冷静下来，并且从你在过十八岁生日前还没有找到治疗癌症的方法的压力中解放出来了，如果你仍然想要到麻省理工学院来上学，你该做些什么呢？

Now that you are Zen calm, liberated from the pressures of not having cured cancer by your 18th birthday, what should you do if you still want to come to MIT?

- 好好上学。选修难的课。向审问犯人般地省察你的想法和推论。像狗跟踪一般紧追不舍并顽强地去追求知识。因为接受教育和拥有聪明才智要比没有的好。

- **Do well in school.** Take tough classes. Interrogate your beliefs and presumptions. Pursue knowledge with dogged precision. Because it is better to be educated and intelligent than not.

- 做好人。这一点是无比的重要。不要肆无忌惮地使坏、或是不在乎、或是恶毒残酷。以好意对待你周围的人。助人。为你的社区贡献。

- **Be nice.** This cannot be overstated. Don't be wanton or careless or cruel. Treat those around you with kindness. Help people. Contribute to your community.

- 追求你的热忱。找到什么是你所爱的事，然后去做。也许是一种运动。也许是一件乐器。也许是学术研究。也许是在你的团体中做一位领导人。数学。烘焙。打盹。跳房子。不论是什么，花时间在上面。全身投入。享受它。

- **Pursue your passion.** Find what you love, and do it. Maybe it's a sport. Maybe it's an instrument. Maybe it's research. Maybe it's being a leader in your community. Math. Baking. Napping. Hopscotch. Whatever it is, spend time on it. Immerse yourself in it. Enjoy it.

如果你做这三件事情，你会是正在横向地申请麻省理工学院。

你看：

If you do these three things, you will be applying sideways to MIT. See:

如果你进了麻省理工学院，那是因为你按照这些步骤做了。如果你在学校表现得好，你将会是聪慧伶俐并且已准备好接受麻省理工学院的教育。如果你是好人，那么你的推荐信会让我们相信麻省理工学院将会因为你来到校园中而变成一个更加狂野地美好的地方。此外，如果你追求你的热忱，你会已经发展出对于某件事的热爱和本领而令你在众多申请人中脱颖而出 - 这就是你的“钓钩”。

但是如果你没能进入麻省理工学院呢？

If you get into MIT, it will be because you followed these steps. If you do well in school, you will be smart and prepared for an MIT education. If you are nice, then your letters of recommendation will convince us that MIT would be a wildly better place with you on campus.

And if you pursue your passion, you will have developed a love for and skill at something that helps distinguish you from other applications – something that is your “hook.”

But what if you don't get into MIT?

是的，你也许会失望。但是你学会了所有你能学的，所以你现在是比较聪慧的；你是你的社区里正向的一员，并且你令人们感到快乐；同时，在高中生涯中你没有去做你以为你应该做的一些可以进入某间特定大学的事，相反的，你做了比世上任何一件其它的事都更想做的事。换句话说，你没有浪费任何一秒钟你的时间。

Well, you may be disappointed. But you learned everything you could, so now you're smarter; you were a positive member of your community, and you made people happy; and you spent high school doing not what you thought you had to do to get into a selective college, but what you wanted to do more than anything else in the world. In other words, you didn't waste a single solitary second of your time.

横向申请，一个座右铭，是指不要做那些你自以为会帮助你进入麻省理工学院(或是哈佛、或是加州理工学院、或是任何一所大学)的事。相反的，你应该用功读书，做一个好人，然后追求你所热衷的事，因为如此你会在高中时做所有该做的事，并且，以一种完全是副作用的形式，你将会在激烈的大学入学竞争中拥有一个你所能争取到的最亮眼的角色。

Applying sideways, as a mantra, means don't do things because you think they will help you get into MIT (or Harvard, or CalTech, or anywhere). Instead, you should study hard, be nice, and pursue your passion, because then you will have spent high school doing all the rights things, and, as a complete side effect, you'll be cast in the best light possible for competitive college admissions.

有时候，你真的可以鱼与熊掌兼得！

Sometimes, you really can have the best of both worlds.