

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

### How to get into MIT

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#### 橫向申請

如何進入麻省理工學院

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每年秋天，就像從樹枝上紛紛墜落的葉片一般，大學招生官們隨著秋風去到全國的各個角落，和高中生們談話並且推銷他們的大學。

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.

我最近剛從一趟行程回來，短短幾天去了北卡羅萊納州洛利、喬治亞州亞特蘭大、和其間十幾個不同的地方。我拜訪了大型高中和小型高中、城市和村鎮，並且在亞特蘭大的一座大禮堂中完成了一場上千人的麻省理工學院"造勢"說明會。

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.

每當我和學生或是他們的家人們說話時，不論是在旅行的途中或是在校園的說明會中，毫無疑問地我一定會被問到一個相同的問題。

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.

這個問題有很多種不同的問法。「你想要在申請人身上看到什麼？」有些人這麼問。「要怎麼樣才能從眾多申請人中脫穎而出？」其他人這麼問。

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.

然而這些不同的版本--還有數不清的其他的版本--其實都是同一個問題的翻版，那就是：

「我如何可以進入麻省理工學院？」

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

這是我告訴他們的：

「橫向申請。」

And here is what I tell them: **Apply sideways.**

讓我分解這個答案。

Let me unpack that.

當人們問我這個問題時，通常是因為他們想要進入麻省理工學院上學，而且要我告訴他們一些做了之後可以令他們順利被錄取的事情。也許他們需要做到鷹級童子軍和總平均成績4.0。或是打鼓專業和學測滿分2400。或是他們需要在高中畢業前解出一道開放數學問題(open math problem)或是找到癌症的治癒方法。「只要告訴我需要做些什麼，」他們雙眼徵詢著，「我會像雷、路易斯(史上最佳橄欖球線衛)掰倒那些最容易受攻擊的對手般，勇猛、矯捷、精準地對付清單上的每一個項目。」

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.*

很恐怖對嗎？是的。一定要做到這些才能被麻省理工學院錄取嗎？不是。  
*Terrifying? Yes. Required to be accepted to MIT? No.*

但是這件事情不是像這樣的。

因為以下這才是你所需要了解的：

「沒有哪一件事，真的，沒有任何一件事，是可以因為這件事情的本身而令你被麻省理工學院錄取的。」

比方說，幾年前，我們沒有錄取一位在他家車房造出一座具備完整功能的核子反應爐的學生。花一秒鐘想想這個事實。

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.

大部分的學生們，當我告訴他們這個故事時，都會變得非常沮喪。畢竟，如果連一個能搭出一座"驚悚"的核子反應爐的孩子都不能被麻省理工學院錄取，那他們還有什麼機會？然而他們把事情弄顛倒了。事實上，這個故事對於大部分的學生而言應該是無比"鼓舞人心"的。這應該是徹底的"解脫"。為什麼？因為在同一年麻省理工學院錄取了超過一千多名其他的學生，其中沒有任何一個人搭出了核子反應爐！

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!

我的意思不是要勸阻學生們各自去從事令人驚豔的科學和技術研究。如果你想做，去做！但是絕對不要因為你覺得這是進入麻省理工學院的門票而去做。並且，對於每一件你所做的事都應該如此--課程、學測(SATs)、和課外活動。

沒有黃金通關門票。

所以，鬆口氣。

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.

現在你可以老僧入定般的冷靜下來，並且從你在過十八歲生日前還沒有找到治療癌症的方法的壓力中解放出來了，如果你仍然想要到麻省理工學院來上學，你該做些什麼呢？

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?

- 好好上學。選修難的課。向審問犯人般地省察你的想法和推論。像狗跟蹤一般緊追不捨並頑強地去追求知識。因為接受教育和擁有聰明才智要比沒有的好。

**-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。這一點是無比的重要。不要肆無忌憚地使壞、或是不在乎、或是惡毒殘酷。以好意對待你周圍的人。助人。為你的社區貢獻。

**-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.

- 追求你的熱忱。找到什麼是你所愛的事，然後去做。也許是一種運動。也許是一件樂器。也許是學術研究。也許是在你的團體中做一位領導人。數學。烘焙。打盹。跳房子。不論是什麼，花時間在上面。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.

如果你做這三件事情，你會是正在橫向地申請麻省理工學院。

你瞧：

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

如果你進了麻省理工學院，那是因為你按照這些步驟做了。如果你在學校表現得好，你將會是聰慧伶俐並且已準備好接受麻省理工學院的教育。如果你是好人，那麼你的推薦信會讓我們相信麻省理工學院將會因為你來到校園中而變成一個更加狂野地美好的地方。此外，如果你追求你的熱忱，你會已經發展出對於某件事的熱愛和本領而令你在眾多申請人中脫穎而出 - 這就是你的"鈞鉤"。

但是如果你沒能進入麻省理工學院呢？

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，你也許會失望。但是你學會了所有你能學的，所以你現在是比較聰慧的；你是你的社區裡正向的一員，並且你令人們感到快樂；同時，在高中生涯中你沒有去做你以為你應該做的一些可以進入某間特定大學的事，相反的，你做了比世上任何一件其它的事都更想做的事。換句話說，你沒有浪費任何一秒鐘你的時間。

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.

橫向申請，一個座右銘，是指不要做那些你自以為會幫助你進入麻省理工學院(或是哈佛、或是加州理工學院、或是任何一所大學)的事。相反的，你應該用功讀書，做一個好人，然後追求你所熱衷的事，因為如此你會在高中時做所有該做的事，並且，以一種完全是副作用的形式，你將會在激烈的大學入學競爭中擁有一個你所能爭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.

有時候，你真的可以魚與熊掌兼得！

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