Experts say that colleges want more than just a student with good grades and impressive test scores – they want someone of high character.

The reality is, colleges have always wanted a student with more than good grades and impressive test scores. Before the emergence of social media, quantitative measures like letters of recommendation, admissions essay, and extracurricular activities were used by colleges and universities to measure potential students during their admissions processes.

Results from Kaplan Test Prep’s 2019 college admissions officers find that 36 percent of the nearly 300 admissions officers polled visit applicants’ social media profiles like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube to learn more about them — up from 25 percent last year. That means it’s fairly likely that decision-makers at colleges and scholarship-granting organizations are taking a peek at your profiles.

Some students take control by shutting down Facebook, Twitter—everything—entirely. Some try hiding their online identities.

You can, however, continue to be yourself on social media with just a few extra filters.

Crafting An Intentional Presence Online:

1. **Follow relevant news channels and public figures** -- show interest in more than just social issues and aspects.

2. **Establish Professional Accounts** – Using your real name, show glimpses of your real life. These types of sites could be focused on art, writing, research, or another discipline, and give you a platform to showcase your experience and skills while networking with potential connections.

3. **Maintain A Professional Presence**: It can also be helpful to maintain a professional presence on other social networking sites, like Facebook and Instagram—places you might not typically think of as professional social media opportunities! There is no need to completely shy away from sharing various posts and photos with your friends and family, but simply making sure that content is appropriate and representative of the online persona you’d want employers to see is what’s crucial. Plus, this is another opportunity to share articles that are relevant to current events and your desired career field, further emphasizing your readiness for entering the workforce.

4. **Highlight interests and accomplishments**: Post videos of your piano recitals, share links to your blog, and post photos from your community service events. If admissions officers are looking you up, it’s to learn more about you, not to necessarily catch you behaving badly.
Cyber Star Tips

Include profile links
• Complement the application by showcasing involvement in the community, and any skills or interests
• Admissions staff does look at included social networks favorably

Connect with Perspective Schools
• Participate in online groups related to interested schools, programs and activities
• Follow Twitter, Instagram and Facebook pages of target schools -- this is a great way to learn more about prospective colleges
• Commenting and asking great questions on their platforms can raise name recognition and improve digital footprint.

Keep it Positive
• Post your successes on your social media sites just in case someone from admissions takes a peek.
• Link to the editorial you’ve written for your school paper, upload a video of your cello recital, or post a photo of your soccer team after a big win.
• Share articles that underscore your interest in history or your love of modern dance.

Locate Prospective Colleges on ZeeMee
ZeeMee is a new social media platform geared toward college admissions. College-bound students can set up a free profile and then upload photos and videos, list their study interests, or expound on a favorite extracurricular activity. Colleges that partner with ZeeMee provide a place to include your profile link on their applications.

Own Your Google Search
• Social media accounts are usually some of the top returns, cleaning up those profiles goes a long way
• School activity is likely to show high up as well from writing an article for the school paper to participating in an extracurricular activity or club that’s on the high school website.
• Purchase yourname.com
• Start a personal blog or portfolio
• Begin commenting on online news stories in local or national publications

Check Utilize Privacy Settings
• Remove phone numbers and addresses this addresses safety concerns and increases location difficulty
• Monitor privacy settings to control discoverability
• Students must set their privacy filter as strongly as possible, but never assume that what they post will not be seen.

Evaluate Cyber Communities
• Review old content: take a look at old photos, group joined, comments or discussions had and post shared. Most are probably fine, but some may not give the best impression. A few clicks can remove them.
• Students must check to see if any cyber “friends” who have access to their profile have posted any unflattering comments or tagged questionable photos with their name.
• If there is something they do not want to be connected to, Students must un-tag themselves and talk to the person who posted the pictures and ask to have them taken down. Student’s should report the content if necessary.
• Any sort of illegal or objectionable behavior deserves a delete!

Questions to Consider Before Posting
1. Does this post make me look like college material?
2. Would I say this on television?
3. Does this post cause for excessive commenting?
4. Is this funny? Is it offensive? Does it require too much explanation?
5. Does everyone need to read this?

Select the Best Network
The four most popular platforms used by colleges are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

Get Linked with LinkedIn
Joining this professional network demonstrates that a student is serious about their future. Make a point to encourage them to connect with teachers, employers, parents’ friends and colleagues, and others. Students could even direct admissions teams to their LinkedIn profile’s by including the address in their application.