

Common Application Tips

There are over three thousand 4 year colleges in the United States. Filling out applications to private colleges and universities can be exciting and exhausting at the same time! In 1975, the Common App was established with only 15 colleges. It was intended to reduce stress for students applying to multiple colleges. Today, approximately 800 of them use the Common App.

Here are some tips to successfully navigate the Common App:

- Start early! Do not wait until the last minute to set up your account. Check deadlines for each campus where you intend to apply.
- Check the Common App member list of colleges. If your campus is not on the list, you need to apply separately to the college.
- The maximum number of colleges you can enter on the Common App is 20.
- The Dashboard is the key to deadlines and the status of each application
- You can search for a college by name, location, or deadline
- By clicking on the name of the college you will get detailed information about that college including deadlines, number of recommendations, supplements, cost, and admission
- Check important application requirements per college on Common App. You might need to search to find questions that are not labeled supplements but must be answered.
- List your most impressive classes and activities first.
- **Do not type in text boxes!** Prepare longer answers ahead of time. Write and edit answers to the activities section, personal statement, and writing supplements offline. Cut and paste using Word or Google Docs; there is no spellcheck on Common App.
- For activities, use powerful, detailed descriptions including honors and awards.
- Personal statement allows up to **650 words**. There are 5 prompts. Be sure your essay accurately reflects information that you want all colleges to receive.
- The Common App essay is not required by all colleges, send it anyway, it is best to showcase yourself.
- Report your highest test scores where you can. Be careful to follow rules for each college, i.e. best score, superscore, or all scores. Edit the testing page **each time** you submit.
- Review, pay, and submit. Look for errors, cut-offs, check on cutting and pasting issues. Next pay with a credit card, fee waiver, or bank routing number. Finally, sign the affirmation and submit.
- Don't wait until the last minute to submit your Common App. The volume of applications sent increases closer to the deadlines. Stay alert for email updates from Common App!