



College Application Guide

How Do I Start My Application Process? You should start this process by setting up your application platform. You will need to create a Common Application account and possibly a Coalition application (depending on the institution you're applying to).

<https://www.commonapp.org/apply>

<https://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/>

The Common Application is integrated with Naviance, but The Coalition application is not.

Common Application Guide for First Time Students:

This is a series of step by step instructions on how to fill out the Common Application.

Steps for Filling out the Common application

Step 1) Gather materials

The information you'll need to complete your applications

Filling out your application takes time. And if you have to keep interrupting your progress to find information, like a certificate for a continuing education course or the address of your last internship, it can take even longer. Get a head start by collecting this information before you begin.

A copy of your high school transcript In the Education section you will enter your high school grades and current courses. Some colleges also need you to self-report your high school transcript. You can check out your Courses & Grades section to learn more.

A list of your activities, work, and family responsibilities You can share your interests and who you are outside of the classroom in the activities section. You can share information about things like work, hobbies, clubs, and community engagement.

Test scores and dates from your college entrance exams (SATs, ACTs, etc.) You may self-report scores for any standardized tests in the Testing section. Every college has different testing requirements. Some colleges will always need your test scores. Other colleges may be flexible or have a test optional policy. Be sure to check the Testing policy of the colleges on your list.

Parent/ Legal Guardian Information Many colleges collect this information in the Family section for demographic purposes. We will ask for your parents occupation, employment status, and education level. If applicable, we will also ask which college(s) they attended and how many degrees they have earned.

Academic honors and achievements The Activities section isn't the only place to show your passion and where you excel! You will also have the chance to share any academic honors or achievements from high school.

First/Last Name *

1992 - 2015 < >

1992	1993	1994	1995
1996	1997	1998	1999
2000	2001	2002	2003

Address *

+ Add Address

Are you currently based in a European Union country, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, or the United Kingdom? [Learn more](#) *

☐ Yes

☐ No

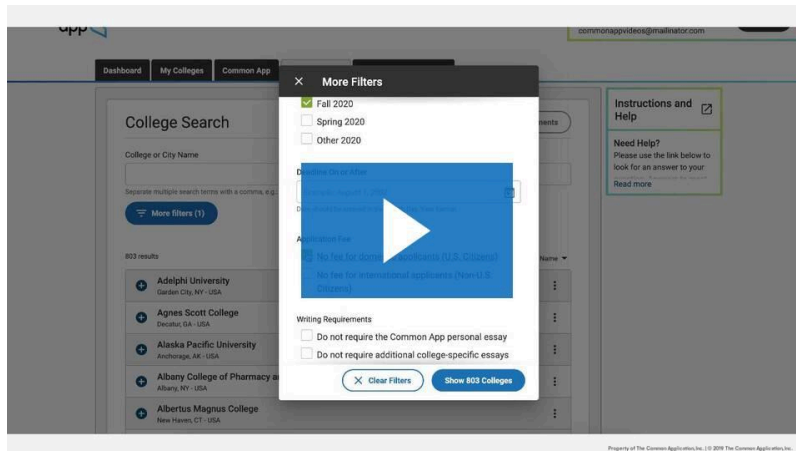
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2) Choose your registration type. If you are applying to college for the first time you'll select the "First Year Student" button.

- **Provide your login credentials.**
 - **Make sure you use an email address you check often. This is the email the Common App and colleges will use to get in touch with you.**
- **Complete your registration information.**
 - **We will need some basic information about you like your name, home address, phone number, and date of birth.**
 - **Be sure to use your legal name as it appears on official school documents and standardized tests. This will make sure colleges can match documents to the correct person.**
 - **At the end, you will adjust your communication preferences and accept the Common App privacy policy.**
- **Select "Create Account" to complete your account.**

Congratulations on taking this first step in the college application journey!

3) Add colleges: Once you've created your account and explored the colleges that accept the Common App, you're ready to start adding colleges. The College Search tab is where you will search for and add the colleges you want to apply to. If you have a school in mind you can search by name. If you want to keep exploring, you can use the more filters button. Some filters include:

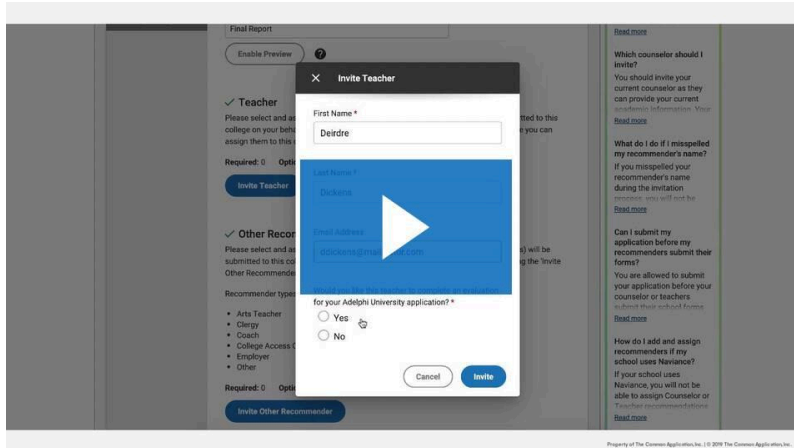


- State or country
- Distance from a zip code
- Enrollment term
- Application deadline
- Application fees*
- Writing requirements
- Standardized testing policy
- Recommendation requirement

Adding a college is easy! You may add a college using the add button in the search results list. You can also select a college and add them using the "Add to My Colleges" button from their info screen.

Once you've added colleges, you can see them on your Dashboard and in your My Colleges tab. Keep in mind you may only add up to 20 colleges. You may adjust your list of colleges at any time.

** While some colleges may charge an application fee, others have no fee to apply. And, many will offer fee waivers under certain circumstances, including financial need, veteran status, and more.*



[Inviting Recommenders](#)

4) Engage Supporters; Collaborate with Counselors, Teachers and more.

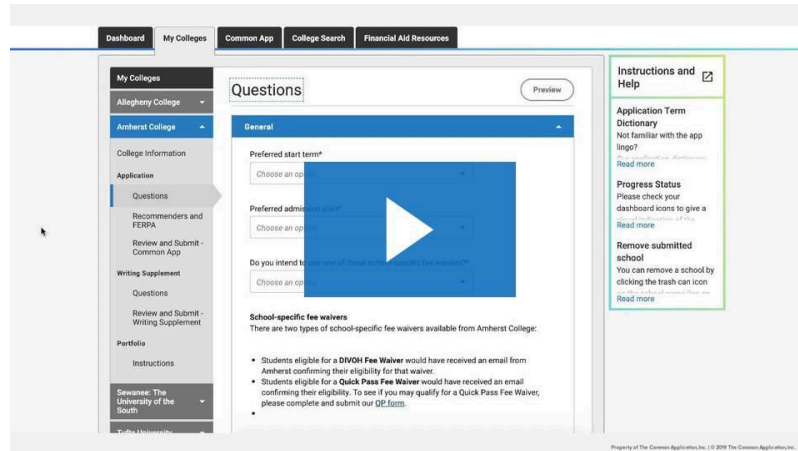
MCPS Uses Naviance therefore, Students DO NOT invite teachers, counselors or other recommenders through the Common Application

Until you Match your Common Application to your Naviance account, and Sign your FERPA Release Authorization form, you will not be able to request transcripts, Letters of Recommendation or any other documentation through naviance, and that information will not be released to your chosen schools.

1. From the My Colleges tab select a college and open their "Recommenders and FERPA" section.
2. If you have not done so already, you will need to complete the **FERPA Release Authorization**.
3. **If your high school uses Naviance or another partner software, you will not invite your counselor or teachers here. There will be instructional text on this page explaining what to do next. You will still add other recommenders and advisors using the steps above.**

In general, each college has their own recommendation requirements. For example, one college may need two teacher recommendations. Some colleges may not want any teacher recommendations. Colleges can also determine what kinds of other recommenders they want. Some may allow for any recommender type, whereas others only allow an employer recommendation.

5) Understanding Requirements



Navigating the My Colleges Tab

Each college needs you to complete common questions and add a counselor. Beyond that their applications vary. Each college can determine their unique requirements for:

- Deadlines
- Application Fees
- Personal Essay
- Courses & Grades
- Test Policy
- Portfolio
- Writing Supplements
- Recommendations

Here are some places where you can find each college's specific requirements:

Explore Colleges

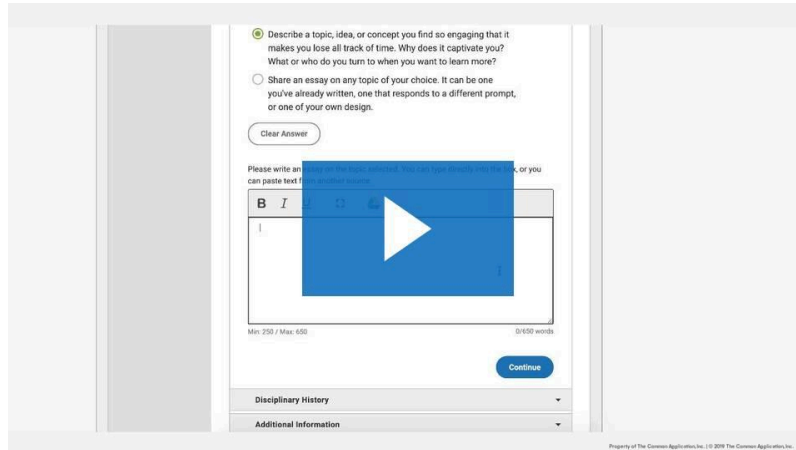
Each college's [Explore Colleges](#) profile provides lots of information about the college. You can find details on application information, campus culture, scheduling visits, and more.

My Colleges: In the My Colleges or College Search tab, you can learn more using a school's college information page. Here you can see requirements for testing, writing, deadlines, and more.

Requirements Grid; The [requirements grid](#) is a comprehensive PDF that lists all the colleges that use the Common App and their requirements. You can also find the grid within the application.

Writing Requirements by College; We maintain a list of all Common App colleges and [their essay prompts](#). This resource will help as you begin planning your essays. For more help on planning essays, check out our essay planning worksheet.

6) Essay Writing- Common App Personal Essay Colleges can either make the personal essay optional or required. In the writing section of your Common App tab, you will see a table that lists each college's requirements.

The screenshot shows the Common App Personal Essay writing interface. At the top, there are two radio button options: the first is selected and asks to describe a topic, idea, or concept that is engaging and makes you lose track of time; the second is unselected and asks to share an essay on any topic of your choice. Below these options is a 'Clear Answer' button. The main writing area is a large text box with a blue play button icon in the center. Above the text box, it says 'Please write an essay on the topic selected. You can type directly into the box, or you can paste text from a document.' Below the text box, it shows 'Min: 250 / Max: 650' and '0/650 words'. At the bottom right of the text box is a 'Continue' button. Below the writing area are two expandable sections: 'Disciplinary History' and 'Additional Information'. At the very bottom, there is a small copyright notice: 'Property of The Common Application, Inc. © 2019 The Common Application, Inc.'

[The Writing Section](#)

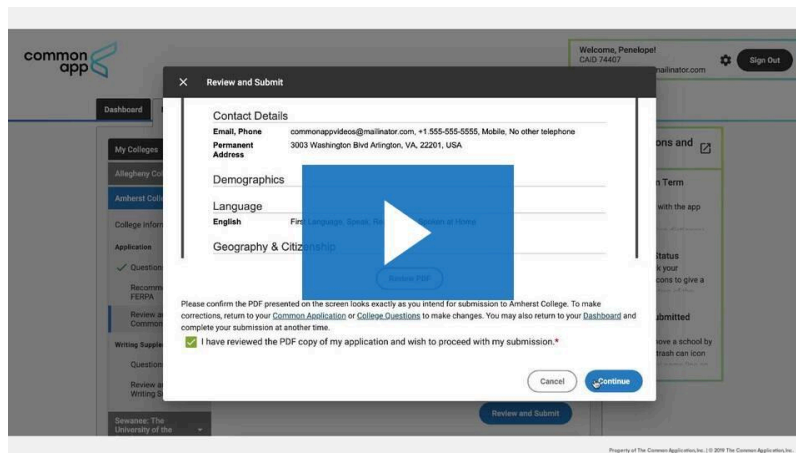
College-specific questions Many colleges include short answer questions or essay prompts within this section. You can find specific information about each college's individual writing prompts [here](#).

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Writing supplements Some colleges use a separate writing supplement. Not all colleges have a writing supplement. Some colleges only request this supplement based on how you answer other questions. You can find more information about writing supplements on the Dashboard or your My Colleges tab.

7) Final Steps- Review and Submit your application Submission is a three-step process:

- 1) Reviewing your application.
- 2) Paying the application fee.(You may have received a fee waiver
- 3) Submitting your application.



Submitting Applications

<https://www.commonapp.org/apply/first-time-students>

