Helpful Hints for completing the COMMON APPLICATION
Undergraduate Application Fall 2025 ♦ commonapp.org

Don't forget to make a copy of all application materials for your records.

Hints and Tips Before You Begin:
- Use your personal email address to create your account. If you do not have an email address, create a free one using www.gmail.com, www.yahoo.com, etc. Avoid using your SDUHSD email address as you will no longer have access to your SDUHSD email account after you graduate.
- At the top of each screen is an instructions box and video tutorials if you need additional information.
- You will need the following materials in order to complete the application:
  - ✓ List of your senior year courses (look on Aeries, under grades, then transcript)
  - ✓ The school code and transcript of any other schools you attended, including community college courses
  - ✓ A list of your extracurricular activities, community service, awards and honors, and work experience from high school including dates and hours spent
  - ✓ Your test scores: AP, SAT, and/or ACT (or dates tests will be taken). *Many schools are not requiring the SAT/ACT as a result of COVID-19, but check with each of your colleges.*
  - ✓ The application fee will vary per school (check, money order, or credit/debit card).

College Search:
- Start by searching for and selecting all of the colleges you will be applying to via the Common Application
  - ○ Search by College or City Name
  - ○ A list of colleges will appear. Click the + next to the correct school.
  - ○ You can either look at your list of "My Colleges" or "Search Again" to add more schools.

My Colleges
- **Home Screen:** Click on the name of the college you are applying to get to the home screen. Read this for each of your colleges as it has important deadlines and application information including how many letters of recommendation you need and from whom.
- **Application & Writing Supplement:** Some schools will have additional questions for you to complete. These can range from short information about the intended major to additional academic information, to short answer or essay questions. Read through this section for each of your colleges so you can plan your time and essay writing accordingly. The information in this section is unique to each school.
- **Recommenders and FERPA:**
  - ○ **FERPA Release Authorization:** This must be completed once and will pertain to all of the colleges you apply to via the Common Application.
  - ○ **Invite Recommenders:**
    - ▪ **Counselors:** Select to add your school counselor. Whether or not you need a recommendation from them, counselors will submit transcripts, school report, school profile, etc. to the Common Application. You must also talk to your counselor in person to receive a letter of recommendation. Click here for more information on this process.
    - ▪ **Teachers:** Select a teacher to add to the specific college's application. You have the option to select different teachers for each application based on the number of recommendations they will accept. Always speak to teachers first about writing your letter of recommendation. Once you add them to the Common Application, they immediately receive an email.
- **Review and Submit Common App:** This will need to be completed for each school once you have completed the main Common App and all of that school's supplements.

Common App
- The information in this section is sent to every college you apply to via the Common App.
- **Profile:** Fill in personal/demographic information. This section is where the Common App Fee Waiver information can be filled in.
- **Family:** Complete with the information that you have. Parent information is used for demographic purposes mostly.
- **Education:** SDA's CEEB Code is 050865. Your counselor's title is "School Counselor". Make sure to list any college courses you have taken during high school. San Dieguito Union High School District does not rank, so select "None". **Your graduating class size is 546**. GPA scale is "4". Your current year classes should be selected as "Semester" and should all be listed as "Full Year" (meaning you earn two grades for the course), except for Government and Economics which would each be listed as "Semester" (meaning you earn one grade for the course). Fill in the rest of the sections as it pertains to you.
- **Testing:** *You must send official score reports from College Board and/or ACT to every school you apply to if they request them.* As well, self-report any SAT, SAT Subject tests, ACT, and/or AP tests you have taken.
- **Activities:** You may list up to 10 activities in this section and they ask you to list them in order of importance to you (you can change the order by clicking the arrow in the upper right-hand corner of each activity box). Be thorough in your descriptions and proofread. As well, be sure to highlight any leadership roles within these activities.
- **Writing:** You will have the option of 7 prompts to choose from to write a 250-650 word essay. There is no correct or better prompt to pick. Select whichever one allows you to best highlight your strengths and unique qualities. Make sure to proofread. As well, the application times out after 60 minutes of not saving or moving on to another question. Write your essay in a separate word processor program and then copy and paste it into the box.
- **Courses & Grades:** Not all colleges will require this portion to be completed. If one of your colleges does, start by answering the general questions. Then for each grade level, you will be asked to enter your school and the year of attendance for that grade. Then select the "Grading Scale" A-F and the "Schedule" as semester. Then enter ALL of your courses for each grade level. You will enter the "S1" and "S2" grades. Leave "Final Grade" blank. You receive 5 "Semester Credits" per grade you receive at SDA. Once you have entered all of your courses for a grade level be sure to check the "I have reported all of my courses for this grade" box.
  - A. **For Students who took the AP English Language/AP English US History Cohort:**
    - Follow these instructions *if* you see the "Courses and Grades" section under the "Common App" tab
    - Add San Dieguito Academy twice under 11th grade in the "Courses and Grades" section (under the "Common App" tab). For the first entry, select "Semesters" for Schedule. For the second, enter "Quarters" for Schedule. Enter in your cohort grades within the second entry with "quarters." Enter the rest of your 11th grade courses under the first entry with "semesters."
    - [Click here for instructions on entering your articulated, dual enrollment and off campus concurrent enrollment college courses.](#)

Review and Submit:
- Review all sections of the application before submitting under the college's name in the "My Colleges" tab.
- You may pay the application fee by credit card or have Common App send a bill by mail.
- You can apply for a fee waiver on the Profile screen in the Common Application Fee Waiver section.
- Print the receipt page and follow any further instructions.

Letter of Recommendation:
- Confirm whether or not you need a teacher, counselor, and/or other recommendations.

- If you need a counselor's letter of recommendation, check out these [step-by-step directions](#).

Transcript(s):
- Make sure you let your counselor know that you are applying via the Common App. Counselors will submit a letter of recommendation (if needed), transcript, School Report, Profile, and Mid-year Report.
- Make sure to send a final transcript from SDA and any other school you have attended to whatever school you eventually decide to attend. **(If you took any college course--including Calculus III/Linear Algebra--make sure to send a final transcript from that school(s), as well.)**