

Common Application Guide

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Getting Started

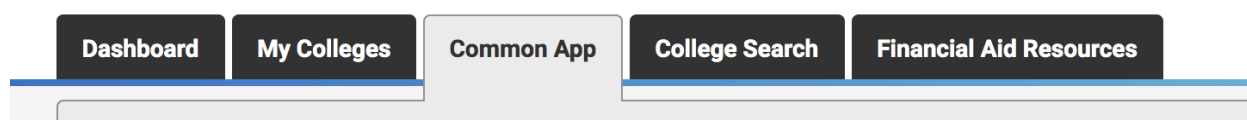
1. Create a *College* folder in Google Drive in which to store your essays, [College Tracker](#) that you made with your mentor (or you can make a copy of now if you're not in the mentorship program!), and anything else you need to keep track of.
2. Create a *Common App* document where you can type up everything you need for completing the Common App, such as: questions you need to ask your family/guardians, activities, and honors
 - a. As you are going through the Common App, you will come across information you'll need to ask your parents and/or your counselor. Keep all those questions in one place so you don't forget and you can ask them at one time.
 - b. You don't want to have to re-do your work if something happens to your application/you forget to save/you apply to transfer in a year! Write *everything* in docs so you can get to later, and copy/paste it into the application once you're done editing them.
3. Go to commonapp.org
 - a. Click Apply Now
 - b. Click First year student
 - c. In your [College Tracker](#) spreadsheet, **write down your email address and password.**
 - d. Create an account and enter all your data.
 - e. The boxes at the end will just send you more information/send your information to colleges. These are optional:

Please review the following:

- ☐ The Common Application may share my contact information with colleges that I am considering applying to so they may communicate with me prior to the submission of my application (you can change the response later within your account settings).
- ☐ The Common Application may communicate with me by email, phone or text message about my account, information relevant to the college admissions process, and my college experience (you can change this response later within your account settings).

Basics of the Common Application

- For any part of the common app, if you see a red asterisk * next to a question, it is a required question. Questions without the asterisk are optional.



Dashboard: Includes deadlines, requirements, and progress of various parts of application.

My Colleges: After you add individual colleges, you can answer supplementary questions and essays here. The individual requirements for each college can be found here.

Common App: Answer informational questions about yourself, family, academics, etc. Personal essay, activities, and honors are found here.

College Search: Can search for and add colleges to your application here.

Financial Aid Resources: A place with a lot of information about Financial Aid. We also have a lot of [financial aid resources for you](#), and you should always double check (on their website/by calling their financial aid office/with your counselor) to see how much aid a school provides before committing to a school.

Note on financial aid: You will be filling out a [FAFSA](#) and possibly a [CSS profile](#) so make sure you're aware of these requirements and find time to sit down with your family and complete these - they are complex and require complete financial documentation. While the Common App gets a lot of your application done, financial aid is located elsewhere and you need to account for this in your time management!

Walkthrough of the Common App Tab

1. Here's where you'll enter all of your basic information! Get this out of the way sooner rather than later; you don't want to be stuck doing it all at the last minute.
2. Remember, as you go along you should make a list of every bit of information you need to get from someone else - you might not know your guardian's education information or your class rank and size off the top of your head!
3. Green check marks indicate that the entire section is finished. You can skip around and complete the application in any order you want.

Profile

Demographics

- You do not have to enter any information asked in this section. It is completely up to you and your comfort level; Common App and colleges simply use it to collect data.
- You may enter whichever sections you want but you only have to indicate *"Yes, I have completed this section to my satisfaction."*

Language

- Any language you can speak, read, or write you have some degree of proficiency and can indicate on the application.
- You can put multiple languages for 'spoken at home' if your family is multilingual. Don't underestimate your skills!

Citizenship

- If you're a US citizen: you'll need to know your social security number to fill this out
- If you are not, you'll need your specific citizenship/visa/DACA/etc. information. Here are our [resources for undocumented students](#), and your mentor or a quick Google search can help you figure out how to answer this if you're not sure.

Fee Waiver

You should qualify for a fee waiver if you received a fee waiver for the SATs. Sign your full name under Fee Waiver signature. This acts as an electronic signature.

Family

- You most likely will have questions for your parents/siblings in this section. Keep track!
- **Number of Degrees:** graduating undergraduate university is one degree, graduate school is another degree, a doctorate is another degree etc. Ask your family if you are unsure.
- **Siblings:** If you have more than 5 siblings, record the most economically burdensome siblings (if they are currently in university/secondary school). You can indicate you have more than 5 siblings in the “additional information” section.

Education

Current or Most Recent Secondary School

- Unless you took a year off of school, you have “*No Change in Progression to report*”.

Grades

- Get this information from your school/transcript and record accurately.

Current or Most Recent Year Courses

- Record senior year classes.
- Course level, if applicable: your courses may be AP, honors, or IB or any “level” - this is listed on your schedule.

Honors

- Honors includes any award/recognition received for your accomplishments.
- Examples:
 - *Dean's List (School)*
 - *Perfect Attendance (School)*
 - *Best AP US History Student (School)*
 - *Outstanding Student Athlete (School)*
 - *Best Team Project at Tech-Women STEM Camp (State)*
 - *Spelling Bee Semi-Finalist (State)*
 - *Scholastic Art Competition Silver Key (National)*

- *Presidential Service Award, Silver Level (National)*
- *National Spanish Exam, Bronze Level (National)*

Community-Based Organizations

- This is optional, but if a CBO has been helpful for you, feel free to input!
- If you work with an organization throughout the year that prepares you for college (La Vida, Squashwise, etc.) you can record that, or you can put Yleana!
 - Select "Other" and type in Yleana Leadership Foundation. You can then put Alyssa, Genevieve, or your mentor - up to you!

Future Plans

- Don't overthink this section. It is non binding and only to gather data. If you don't know your career interest, choose "*Undecided*". This section will NOT affect your admissions.

Testing

Tests Taken

- You will self report scores.
- **Make sure you know what your schools require you to submit!**
 - Some schools require self-reported scores, or scores sent from College Board directly. Other schools don't require any scores
 - You may need to report every SAT you've taken, or just your super score.
 - Make sure to customize this accurately for each specific school you're applying to!
- You will need the dates of each and your exact scores for previously taken tests.
- If you get new scores, you can always go back and add them in to your application.

Activities

- **RECORD THIS INFORMATION IN A SEPARATE DOCUMENT IN YOUR DRIVE FOLDER.** You will need to edit and revise this section and you do not want to lose this information.
- Pay attention to details!
 - **Capitalization** must be consistent
 - **Formatting** must be consistent
 - Verbs should always be in the **past tense**

Description of Activities:

- Start out by writing down what you did, regardless

Activity 1

Activity type*
Choose an option

Position/Leadership description and organization name, if applicable*

Please describe this activity, including what you accomplished and any recognition you received, etc.
(Max characters: 150)*

Participation grade levels*

Timing of participation*

Hours spent per week*

Weeks spent per year*

I intend to participate in a similar activity in college.*

Pull-down menu of various activity types (Athletics, Arts, etc.)

Consistent formatting and capitalization - pick a method and stick to it! Ex:
Vice President, Model United Nations
Varsity Player, Basketball
or
Model United Nations: Vice President
Basketball: Varsity Player

Use action verbs to explain what you accomplished/did in factual terms - more info below

Hours per week on average. Some clubs meet 2 hours most of the year but 10 hours a week during busy season - choose a number that accurately represents the average/your involvement

Not binding in any way :)

of character length. You can cut it down after!

- You may not be able to include *everything* you did in 150 characters, but you probably can! Pick what is most important and cut out unnecessary words (the, also, part of, some, etc.) (color words!!)
- Use action words to give your activities substance! Remember to use **past tense** (LIU!!)
 - Google resume action words: this is the PDF that shows up:
<http://career.opcd.wfu.edu/files/2011/05/Action-Verbs-for-Resumes.pdf>
 - Action words show what you did **and** skills built through the activity. This applies to your future life and how you'll be able to use these skills in college and beyond, so choose your words wisely!
 - Decorating a room isn't a lifelong skill, but project management is. Playing basketball isn't related to any career besides being a professional basketball player, but motivating a team is. Identify what *transferable* skills you got out of your activity.
- Examples of action phrases:
 - Elected to, coordinated with, implemented goals, competed internationally, adapted leadership structure plans, developed innovative projects
- If you held leadership positions, make sure to include what you personally did *and* what the club did as a whole.
- Quantify your accomplishments as much as possible
 - *Organized 28 member meetings*
 - *Fundraised \$325*

Additional Information

The purpose of this section is to communicate information that is not explicitly stated in your application. There is a helpful article on good ways to use this section [here](#).

Some ways you might use this section are:

- To expand on your activity list
 - If many of your activities connect and you'd like to explain them
 - If there is something significant with your activities that you feel isn't covered elsewhere in your application
 - Check your college's supplement first - there may be a place to discuss this in one of those questions
- To explain family situations
 - More than 5 siblings: give the same information from the siblings section of the Common App for any siblings you didn't list before
 - Financial situations, like only being able to take the SAT once due to fees, not having a computer at home, COVID-related disruption, etc.
 - Recent parental disability, unemployment, etc. - especially something that may not show up on your financial aid
- To explain anything that disrupted your academic progress
 - Health or learning disabilities
 - Health emergency that pulled you out of school (yours or a family member's)
 - Moving, switching into a new school system, etc.
- To explain a drop in your grades at any point
 - Health/family situations
 - Switching schools
 - Particularly challenging course you had to adapt to

General tips:

- You can cover multiple topics in Additional Information, just clearly title each and separate them with a line

- Keep it informational. You can be descriptive, but this section is intended to convey facts that will help the admissions officer understand who you are. At the same time...
- Use your best writing skills. Every bit of the application is an opportunity to show the admissions officer that you're competent, so continue using complex sentence structures and solid vocabulary.

Supplemental Essays

Most colleges will ask for essays - or short responses - in addition to your personal essay. These can be found in “My Colleges.”

- Check these ASAP once you have added your college(s).
- Put the prompts in a second document, *[College Name] Supplement*, where you can work on them until they're done.
- If it fits with the prompt, you can use this to expand on an activity that isn't in your personal essay and isn't fully covered in the activities section.
- Most universities are looking for you to *show a vested interest* in **their school**. It is not enough to say “I want to go to your school because it is a good school;” you need to figure out *why*. Explore their website, see if anyone can connect you to a current student, research their specific academic programs, extracurriculars, classes, additional opportunities, etc.
 - You should come across things that you are excited about!!! Add these into the essay to show how you will take advantage of the opportunities and resources provided.
 - Tell your mentor/Yleana if you need help finding information about the college! We will try our best to connect you with a current student who you can ask questions to.