Mrs. Thomson's Common Application Help Guide

Click here for the **Common App Walkthrough from College Essay Guy**

Important! You may add and apply to up to 20 colleges. You may add and remove a college at any time prior to submitting an application. Once you submit an application, you will not be able to remove the college from your My colleges list.

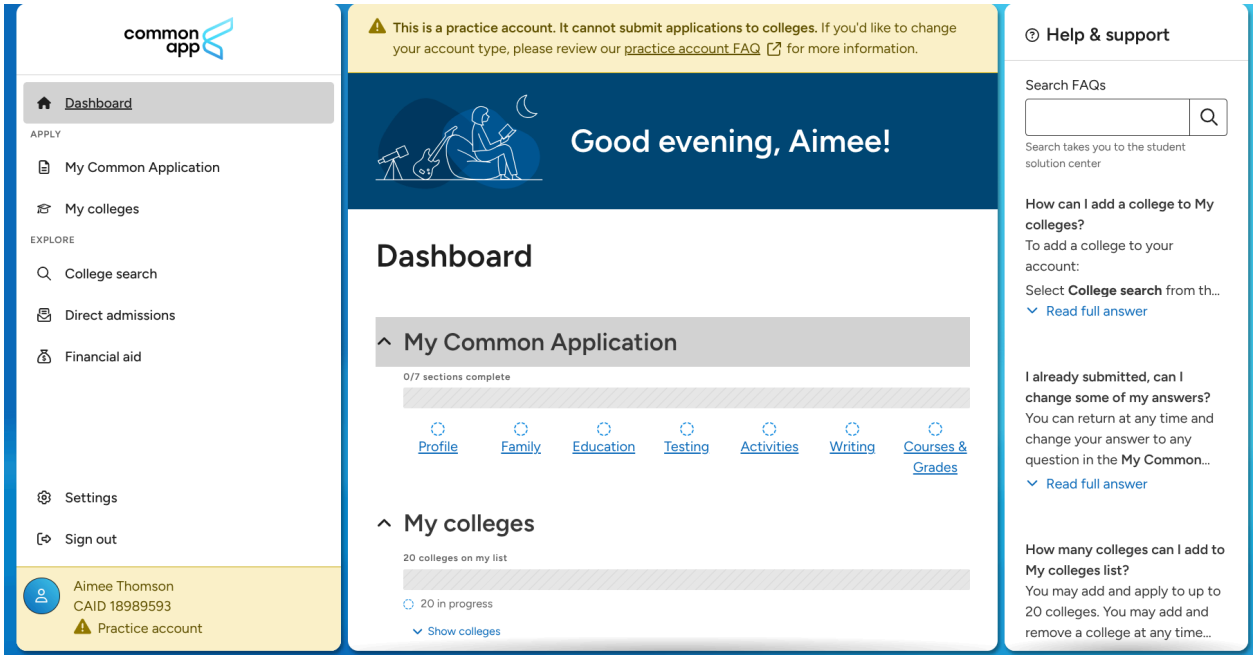
Create A Common App Account

Create an account at www.commonapp.org

Use personal (not school) email address!
Create account for Fall 2027

**** NOTE: The Common App will be closed from July 28 - August 1. Anything you've done on the Common Application tab will not be deleted - Information on My Colleges WILL be deleted ****

Common App Dashboard and Overview



- **My Common Application** -- The meat of the application. This info will go to ALL colleges you apply to using the Common App.
- **My Colleges** -- These are the school specific questions, and where you submit the application to each school. IMPORTANT!!! You must ALSO add these schools to your My Colleges List in SCOIR so that your materials can be sent by the counseling office.
- **College Search** -- This is where you seach for schools, to add them to your My Colleges List

- **Direct Admissions** -- See which schools are offering you direct admission based on the info you have entered in your Common App.
- **Financial Aid Info** - Has info about applying for financial aid. This is NOT where you actually apply for financial aid. There is nothing to do in this section.

My Common App Sections

 means the section is complete

 means the section has at least one incomplete question

Profile section

- ***Personal Information:*** Double check your birth date
- ***Geography and Nationality*****:**
    - US citizens and permanent residents: SSN is required if applying for financial aid. Double check that it's correct
    - Permanent residents (green card holders): You will also need to upload a copy of your green card
    - US Residents: Includes refugees and asylees, DACA, Undocumented
    - Citizen of non-US country: Includes those who hold non-immigrant visas (e.g. H-4, L-2, A-2, etc). You will need to know if your visa is still valid, and what the number and issue date are.
- ***Common App Fee Waiver*** for students who qualify for **free or reduced lunch or meet other specific financial criteria**. A special fee waiver offered by the university isn't done here - it's in the school-specific questions.
    - If you have questions about your eligibility, speak to Mrs. Thomson or your counselor first.
    - If you believe you qualify, click Yes, and then one of the reasons
    - ***IMPORTANT:*** In SCOIR, go to Application Documents. Under Fee Waiver Request, choose Request and Sign. Click the checkbox, choose Save & Sign.

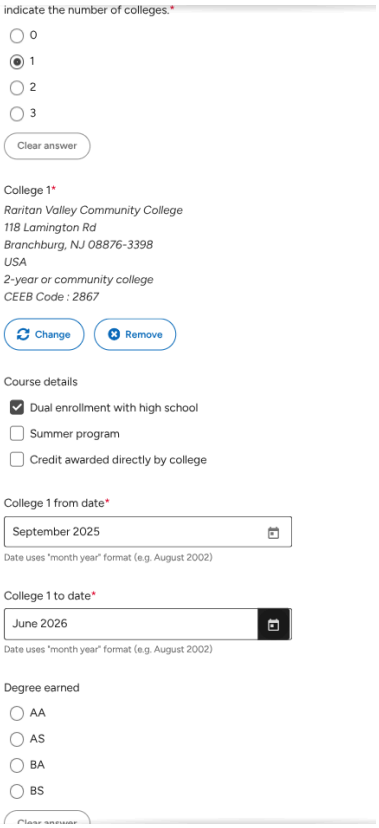
Family section

- ***Household:*** Provide information about your parents, step-parents, and other guardians.
    - Parents' Marital Status - refers to your biological or adoptive parents, even if you don't live with them.
    - Married - Refers to being legally married.There are other options (e.g. never married or civil union that describe situations for parents who were never legally married)
    - Divorced - Year of Divorce required

- ***Parent/Guardian Info*****:** If your parent attended a foreign college or university, first try typing it in, to see if it comes up. If it's not there, the last option in the list is "I don't see the college I'm looking for in this list". Select that option. You'll be prompted to enter the country and name of the university (address isn't required).

Education section

- *Current or Most Recent Secondary/High School:*
    - HHS should come up when you click Find School.
    - Start Date: September 2023
    - Graduation Date: June 2027
- *Other Secondary/High Schools:* Add previous schools if you transferred to HHS. You do NOT need to add VoTech here if you are a part-time student.
- *Colleges and Universities:* Fill this section if you took ANY college courses, INCLUDING **concurrent or dual enrollment**. This does *not* include AP courses that were not taken through dual enrollment.
    - Concurrent Enrollment



- *Grades*
    - Graduating class size: 615 (approx)
    - Class rank reporting: None
    - GPA scale reporting: 100
    - Cumulative GPA: Use the weighted cumulative GPA from your transcript.
    - GPA Weighting: Weighted
- Current Year Courses
    - Report your senior year courses. Recommend doing this section after school starts, once you have a firm schedule.
    - Number of Courses: Include all classes you are taking for credit, including PE/Health and Spring semester courses. Don't include Study Hall or Late Arrival/Early Dismissal.
    - Scheduling system: Semester

    - Course levels: AP, Dual Enrollment, Honors, College Prep, Regular/Standard (for non-leveled classes - like PE and Accounting, or Academic courses not at one of the other levels)
- *Honors:* put any academic-related honors/achievements here. Do not include the same things on both this and Activities - one place or the other.
    - Example Honors: AP Scholar with Distinction, Chemagination winner, NJ Seal of Biliteracy, Poetry contest winner, National Merit Commended or Semi-Finalist
    - HHS does not have an honor roll.
    - Some students do not have any honors to enter - that's ok!
- *Future Plans:* This refers to your career plans. This is NOT the same as your major (that will be chosen in the school-specific section)

Testing section

- **If you are applying test optional, do not self-report your scores SAT/ACT here.** You'll indicate in the school-specific section that you're applying test optional.
- If you are applying with scores, you can self-report your scores. Some schools (e.g Rutgers, Penn State, Pitt) will also require official scores (you must send them from College Board or ACT). You must check the school policy for each school to see how they want to receive your scores.
- Future test dates - those are for you to let them know about scheduled tests that you haven't received scores for/haven't taken at the time you apply. Remember to go back and report your August/October scores, since you will have those by the time you apply.
- This is where you report AP scores - official scores are NOT required for AP scores (except Georgetown). We recommend reporting scores of 4 or 5, and maybe 3 (depends on you and where you are applying)

Activities section

- Resource: CEG How to Write a Successful Activities List
- Activities
    - Put your most significant activities at the top - includes those that relate to your academic area of interest, those most selective/impressive, those you spend the most time on.
    - Combine related activities if necessary (e.g. several music ensembles)
    - Almost everything you do outside of 7:30-2:30 can be considered an activity. Clubs. Sports. Religious organizations. Community service. A job. Babysitting. Social media influencer. Taking grandpa to dialysis 3 times a week. Getting your brother off the bus and making dinner 4 nights a week. Helping in the family business (even if it's not paid). If you don't include it, the assumption is you are scrolling through FYP on TikTok all day.
    - Use common abbreviations (e.g. VP for Vice President), but spell out organization names and things that are unclear. Don't assume the reader knows.
    - In the activities description, use characters wisely! Full sentences aren't necessary, but be grammatically correct. Common abbreviations are ok. Use action words. Think about lasting impact, and impact to community. Quantify where possible.
    - Remember that leadership does not mean you are an officer. You can lead efforts and projects without being an officer.
    - If you have something robust that doesn't fit, use the Additional Info section of the Writing tab. Some applications also allow a resume upload in the school-specific section.

    - Hours per week is approximate - do your best -- and remember there are only 24 hours per day - which includes sleeping, eating and going to school!
- Responsibilities and Circumstances
    - Sometimes academics and activities are impacted by household responsibilities or other circumstances. Sharing this information with colleges can help them better understand the context of your application.
    - Select options for things you do for 4 or more hours per week. This is for students who consistently bear more responsibility in the home/family on a regular basis.
    - Special Circumstances: This includes homelessness and unstable living situations, lack of internet access, living without consistent heat, power, water, or access to food, living on your own, and other similar circumstances.

Writing section



BEFORE COMPLETING THIS SECTION -- ADD YOUR SCHOOLS TO MY COLLEGES.
This helps you to know where your essay is required. If not required, you'll get the option of whether to submit it or not.

- *Personal Essay:* main essay and is NOT school specific. It goes to all the schools on the Required list (so add all of your schools under College Search, then come back here to see who uses it)
    - 650 word hard limit.
    - Formatting options are VERY limited. Check your essay carefully to be sure it looks okay.
- Additional Information
    - These essays are are not completed by most applicants. You should only be responding to these questions with essential information, not just to fill the space!
    - CEG: How to Use the Common App Additional Information section and Challenges and Circumstances section: Guide + Examples
    - These are NOT additional 650 word creative essays. Keep it brief, factual and reflective.
    - Question 1: Challenges and Special Circumstances. See the list of examples in the Common App.
        - Common reasons to complete this essay: Mental health or physical health struggles, family disruptions, homeless and food/housing insecurities, significant family responsibilities, impactful moves and school changes, physical or learning disabilities or differences.
        - Note: You are NOT required to provide this information and can choose to supply as much or as little as you feel comfortable supplying!
        - Be factual and focus on impact to you, your academics, ECs, etc. (e.g."In 10th grade, I missed more than 2 months of school due to surgery. Because of the timing of the surgery in the Spring, it was challenging to make up all of the work before the end of the year and final exams. While my final grades were lower than I would've liked, you'll see that I was able to rebound in my junior year" or "Prior to my junior year, my family had been comfortable financially. That summer, my father's company downsized and he lost his job. He's found a new

position, but our family's finances have taken a big hit. My mother went back to work full-time, and I've had to take on more responsibilities at home. Each day, I get my little brothers off the bus, help with their schoolwork, and make dinner for my family. As a result, I reluctantly was unable to continue participation in Marching Band and Debate club (after-school activities))

- Question 2: Additional Details/Qualifications Not Reflected
  - Other details not adequately explained elsewhere in application
  - Again - BRIEF. Bullet points can be used here!
  - Common reasons to complete this essay: Additional <u>significant</u> activities that did not fit in the Activities section, Important details about activities (e.g. research project details) already on the activities list. Additional Honors not otherwise on the application.
  - *Transfer students - explanation that grades from previous schools are not included in your GPA.*
  - *Votech Students - explanation of your program and how shared time is structured and has limited your course selection at HHS*
  - *Independent Study/Senior Outreach - explanation of your project/internship.*
- If you need guidance about whether to use this/how to word it, check with Mrs. Thomson or your counselor

Courses and Grades section



BEFORE COMPLETING THIS SECTION -- ADD YOUR SCHOOLS TO MY COLLEGES.

- This is a self-reported grades section. It is ONLY used by those schools that are listed under required (so add all of your schools under College Search, then come back here to see if you need to do it).
- Schedule: Yearly; Grading scale: 1-100
- Have your unofficial transcript in front of you when doing this.
- For each year, use your transcript to enter course name, course level, final grade, credits. You must match the transcript.
- *12th grade:* Click 'no'. You don't have any 12th grade courses with grades on the transcript. You don't need to enter them here.

My Colleges Tab

This section should not be done until after August 1.

Add schools here by searching them from the College Search tab.

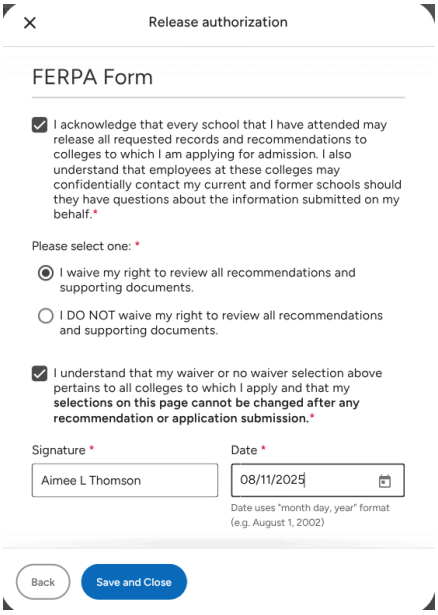
Application-Questions section

- Semester you are applying for (Fall 2027), live on campus/commute, school specific fee waivers, EOF/EOP, major, back-up major, campus preference, legacy information

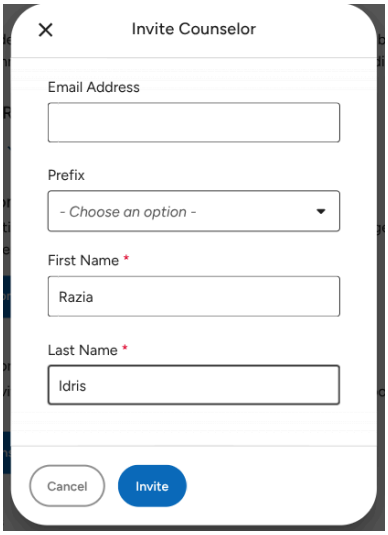
- You might find supplemental essays hiding in the various sections here: Academics (sometimes after you select a campus/major, one will appear), Extracurricular Activities, Writing, Additional Information - click through and look for big text boxes
- ***Early Decision Instructions***
    - Selected in this section. Remember you can apply to one school ED, and it is binding. You will need to agree to the conditions of ED. Read them carefully before "signing" in the box.
    - Go to Recommenders and FERPA. Click Invite Parent. Include only the name for your parent. Do not include the email address. We will complete the ED agreement in SCOIR, so your parent doesn't need to sign here.
    - Go to SCOIR. Make sure that you have the school in your Applying list, and that you've indicated Early Decision (click to make changes). Then, complete the ED agreement. You can also find it under Application Documents. Click "Sign Agreement". Check the box to agree. Select a parent in the drop down or manually agree. Your parent will get an email invite to sign the agreement.
    - Your counselor will sign and submit the agreement to your ED school after both student and parent sign.
    - Click here for screenshots of the SCOIR process
- ***School-Specific Fee Waivers***
    - If you have a school-specific fee waiver code, it will be entered somewhere in this section.

Application - Recommenders and FERPA section:

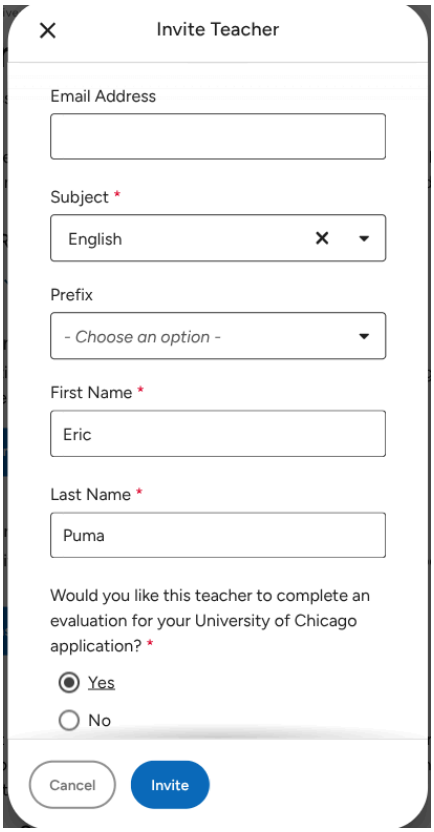
- **FERPA Release authorization.**
    - Completed once, and applies to all schools on Common App. You will complete a separate FERPA release in SCOIR to cover all schools. Your decision on both must match.
    - FERPA refers to your right to someday view your application letters of rec at the school you attend, if the school maintains those.
    - We strongly recommend that you WAIVE THE RIGHT. This assures schools that your letter is authentically written by your recommender. Your recommender will not agree to write you a letter if they can't write a positive letter.



- **Recommenders:**
  - ***Do not include any email addresses here.***
  - *Counselor*: Click Invite Counselor. Include only your counselor's first name and last name. No email address. Click invite.



  - *Teacher*: Click Invite Teacher. Include only your teacher's name and subject. No email address. Click the YES option. Click invite.



- *Parent*: Only if you are applying Early Decision. Include only your parent's name. No email address. Click invite. Don't forget to go to SCOIR and have your parent do the ED agreement there.
- ***Disregard all messaging to download forms. We will submit everything electronically through SCOIR.***
- Other recommenders: This is for outside recommendations only. Instructions and details.

Review and Submit Common App

Notice - there's not one big submit button! Submission is the last section under the Application section of My Colleges for each school.

You can only submit when your application is complete (green checks everywhere).

The information in the application at the time of submission is what is submitted.

Application Submission is a 3 step process:

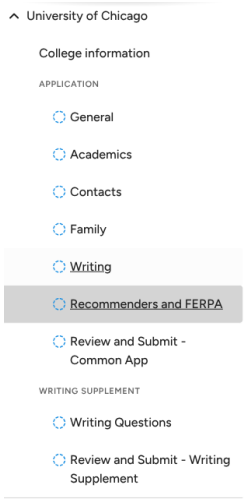
1. Review: View the PDF of your application to School XYZ. Review carefully - this is your last opportunity to make changes for this school.
2. Pay: Pay the application fee, or click through if your fee is waived.
3. Submit: Enter your signature and the date. Then click the final Submit button. Yay!!

You will receive a specific email when your application is submitted.

Remember, a separate Writing Supplement section requires a separate submission…

Writing Supplement section

While many schools include supplemental essays in the Application section (above), some schools (e.g. U Chicago) put all of their supplemental essays in one Writing Supplement section. This is a SEPARATE submission from the application itself. You will see it tracked with green check marks and also on the dashboard. ***Be sure to submit this after you submit your application!***



Return to Dashboard

After submitting, return to the Dashboard to confirm that all required parts of the application have been submitted for each school. You'll see here when the school has downloaded your application.