

THE APPLICATION

The process of applying to colleges—the various forms to be completed and submitted, the multiple application options and deadlines—can be challenging. We hope that the following information will be helpful.

There are several components to each college application:

- the **application form** itself, including essay(s), prepared and submitted by you
- the **Secondary School Report** that provides an overall description of you, prepared by your high school guidance or college counselor
- your **high school transcript** that covers all 4 years, submitted by your high school; it is a good idea to review your transcript for accuracy in the fall of your senior year (although some colleges will have you submit self-reported courses and grades during the application process, asking for an official transcript only if you enroll)
- **standardized test scores** (for those colleges that require them); you must either self-report to the colleges which allow you to do so or instruct the College Board and/or ACT which scores to send to which colleges

Note: If an additional test is taken after scores have been sent and you want them to be considered, you must again instruct the College Board/ACT to send the latest scores.

- **teacher recommendations** (usually one or two, from 11th or 12th grade)
- **application fee** via credit card
- some colleges also ask for copies of a **graded paper** showing teacher comments so look through your collection of great essays
- **supplemental information** such as an art or writing portfolio, or a digital file of a musical performance, should also be submitted when appropriate.

The application form that you submit is the one part of the process over which you have total control; keep in mind that your application readers are looking for consistent themes about your character and accomplishments from every part of your application.

The Common Application

Hundreds of colleges now accept the **Common Application**, designed to make it easier for students to apply to multiple colleges. Students complete one application, including a 250-650 word Personal Essay about themselves, and may submit it to any Common Application college, thereby avoiding the need to fill out multiple applications.

The Common Application may be accessed at www.commonapp.org. The instructions are explained clearly on their website and are quite straightforward.

Many Common Application colleges also require students to complete their respective supplemental application. The supplement may contain an additional essay or two, a common question being “Why is our college a good fit for you?” Your answers to this question must be well thought-out and college-specific; as with the Personal Essay, the supplement essays should not be left to the last minute. When you add a college to your Common Application, their supplemental application questions and essays will appear.

Other colleges, including the service academies and many public universities, do not accept the Common Application but have their own application platforms that generally ask for similar information and often have essay questions similar to those in the Common Application. There is also an application accepted by many colleges from the **Coalition for College** (www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org).