



College Applications

TYPICALLY, ALL APPLICATIONS ARE SUBMITTED ONLINE. BE SURE TO COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE DEADLINE TO AVOID COMPUTER GRIDLOCK!

DOUBLE-CHECK THE DATA ON YOUR APPLICATIONS FOR ACCURACY. OFTEN COLLEGES WILL VALIDATE IT WITH A TRANSCRIPT LATER. YOU DON'T WANT ANY SURPRISES!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

TYPES OF APPLICATIONS:

At first glance, college applications may seem quite simple — but look again! You need to read the fine print and understand the various types of college admissions options. Here are the primary admission options you will encounter:

Early Decision (ED)

This admission option is designed for students who have researched colleges, have a clear first-choice school, and are willing to forsake all others for their #1 choice. *Early Decision* requires that students agree to attend this school if accepted, and must withdraw any other applications to other schools. This is a binding decision. You can only apply to one college *Early Decision*. Choose this option carefully.

Early Action (EA)

Similar to *Early Decision*, students apply by an early deadline; however, students are not bound to attend the school if accepted. Students can apply *Early Action* to more than one university unless it is *Restrictive Early Action*, in which case they can apply to only one *Early Action* school and no *Early Decision* schools. Students learn of the college's decision in December with no requirement to decide until later.

Regular Decision (RD)

Regular Decision is the most common type of application. Colleges provide a deadline to submit applications and the admissions board reviews applications to make decisions prior to sending out acceptance or rejection letters. Students have until May 1 to make a decision.

Rolling Admission

Many large universities offer *Rolling Admission*. This type of application allows students to apply any time between September and July. Applications are evaluated as they are received, and admission decisions are sent as soon as they are available. Often, schools operate on a first-come-first-served basis, so it makes sense to apply early.

Deferred Admission

Deferred Admission is when a school reviews an application but chooses to wait to make a final decision. Colleges might want to see a student's mid-year grades, additional SAT or ACT scores, or other additional information. If a student is deferred from *Early Decision* or *Early Action*, his application may be converted to a *Regular Decision* type. Students should promptly reply with additional requested information to speed up the college's decision.

Application Choices

Today, colleges can offer their own proprietary application or participate in the Common Application; Universal Application; Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success (CAAS); or join a state consortium application. Some applications are very long and in-depth while others are quite simple and straightforward. Students have more choices than ever in choosing which application type is a good fit for them. **Many colleges offer two or three different types of applications from which to choose; be strategic and understand the nuances of each application and which is the best fit for you. You can reduce the stress of last-minute applications by reviewing the options early.**

The new **Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success (CAAS) application**, launched in the summer of 2016, offers students a free online portal to begin saving information and files during freshman year for later use on the college application section. In addition, students have access to a collaboration platform to communicate and share with teachers, counselors, educational consultants, and community-based organizations. You can start your Virtual Locker on the **CAAS** portal here:

[HTTP://WWW.COALITIONFORCOLLEGEACCESS.ORG/STUDENTS.HTML](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/students.html)

The Common Application also enables students to begin their application as early as freshman year in high school and offers a means to roll over the application data to senior year to save time. You can start your Common Application here:

[HTTP://WWW.COMMONAPP.ORG/](http://www.commonapp.org/)

The Universal Application offers students a means to download a copy of the application in PDF form from their website for early review and preparation:

[HTTPS://WWW.UNIVERSALCOLLEGEAPP.COM/](https://www.universalcollegeapp.com/)

Reminders

- When asking for a recommendation, ask a teacher who knows you well and appreciates the work you have done.
- The Common Application and Coalition Application are both open for students to view and begin filling in as early as freshman year of high school. Both applications open officially for the college application season August 1, and allow students to “rollover” data already filled in on the main part of the application. Colleges can be added to the student’s application after August 1 of senior year. It’s a great idea to open these applications early to better understand what colleges will be looking for once you’re ready to officially apply. No one has access to the information until you have formally submitted the application (and typically entered your credit card number to cover the application fee.) Admissions officers care about spelling, grammar, and accuracy, so be sure to have someone edit your application prior to sending it off.
- Whether you are applying to college, for a scholarship, or for a job, the forms that are required will request much of the same information. The first half will ask for your personal data (name, address, parent info, etc.); the second half asks about your extracurricular activities and job experience and often requires essay(s).

LOOK FOR TEACHERS WHO CAN WRITE WELL AND WHO WILL BE MINDFUL OF YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION DEADLINES.

PRIOR TO REQUESTING A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION, CHECK WITH YOUR HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING OFFICE TO SEE IF THERE IS AN OFFICIAL FORM THAT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL REQUIRES YOU TO COMPLETE.

Additional Information:

Many colleges will ask you for the following information in addition to your personal data, extracurricular activities, and essay(s):

- **Secondary School Report:** The Secondary School Report is used to verify your school record and often requests a letter of recommendation. Most of the time this is managed online through the application, but check with your high school counselor if unsure.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** Most private colleges (and some public colleges) require one or more recommendations from academic teachers and possibly someone else who knows you well. Give the writer an information packet that includes a list of schools you are applying to, a list of deadlines, and a copy of your résumé and transcript. You may include a stamped envelope addressed to the admissions office if using regular mail. Include a cover letter that explains more about why you want to attend the college or which classes you enjoy the most. Often high school counselors, teachers, and members of the community can submit the recommendation online. Check each school's requirements to see how many and what type of recommender(s) you will need.
- **Standardized Test Scores:** You will need to have official reports of your SAT or ACT scores sent directly to colleges. You can order your scores to be sent at the time you take the tests or later when you know where you want to apply. See the Standardized Test Fact Sheet for more information on how and where to order your reports.
- **Supplementary Information:** Some colleges will ask you additional essay questions about why you want to attend that specific college or why you want to major in your chosen field. Applications often provide a specific space for giving information not readily available in the rest of the application; for example, you may need to explain a dip in grades due to a prolonged illness or to explain extreme circumstances that may have impacted your ability to participate in extracurricular activities.
- **Visual and Performing Arts Major:** If you are planning to major in music, art, theater, or other visual and performing arts, colleges may ask for additional efforts such as auditions or portfolios. These can be an essential factor in admissions criteria and frequently take some effort. Verify requirements of any portfolio or audition expectations. Begin collecting portfolio pieces and practicing for auditions as soon as you know the requirements. Check out the Visual and Performing Arts Unit for more details.
- **Additional Content:** Many schools provide an option to upload a file - music, video, document, or even a graded paper that reflects your strengths or can potentially help you tell your story. Some of the member colleges of the CAAS and Common Application will likely offer students the option to upload files as an alternative or supplement to the personal statement essay. Watch for this innovative trend to continue, and decide how you can best share your strengths and unique characteristics!

**IF YOU ARE DENIED
BY A COLLEGE:**

UNLESS YOU HAVE
VERY COMPELLING,
NEW INFORMATION
TO SEND TO THE
SCHOOL, MOVE ON.
THERE IS MORE THAN
ONE GREAT SCHOOL
FOR EVERY STUDENT.

**IF YOU ARE
WAITLISTED BY A
COLLEGE:**

CALL THE SCHOOL
TO FIND OUT HOW
MANY STUDENTS
TYPICALLY GET
ACCEPTED FROM
THE WAITLIST. IF IT
IS A REASONABLE
NUMBER, SEND IN
ANY COMPELLING,
NEW INFORMATION.
BE SURE YOU HAVE
COMMITTED TO A
SCHOOL BY THE MAY
1ST DEADLINE, EVEN
IF YOU ARE STILL
WAITING TO HEAR
FROM A WAITLIST
SCHOOL.

AFTER THE APPLICATION

It's understandable. After all of the months (years?) of preparation for your college applications, you hit "submit" and breathe a sigh of relief. Most students are ready for a break once the applications have been submitted. Unfortunately, it's not time to rest just yet. Many accomplished students have failed to take key "after application" steps and then experienced less than favorable results. Use the following checklist to keep you from missing important correspondence from schools and to help ensure a strong finish to the application season:

- ☐ **Continue working diligently in your classes.** Colleges frequently request semester transcripts, and they will definitely want a final transcript. If you're not careful, senioritis can derail the best laid plans.
- ☐ **Verify that all required documentation has been received.** Check for SAT/ACT scores and letters of recommendation in particular. Usually, colleges will have you create a portal where you can check the status of your application. These portals will often alert you about missing documentation.
- ☐ **Become an avid email "checker."** While many students are not accustomed to communicating via email, colleges are. Now is the time to start a daily habit of checking your email. Colleges will send important deadlines, messages, and advice through email. This should be the student's duty, not the parents'. Once enrolled, colleges will communicate directly with the student through email. It's best to get used to this form of communication now.
- ☐ **Demonstrate interest.** You've heard it before. Admissions officers really do pay attention to students who show interest in their school. If the option is available, schedule an interview and consider making a visit to the campus even if you have already visited before. Continue to attend college fairs, and take advantage of any opportunities to meet representatives from a college of interest.
- ☐ **Start applying to scholarships.** This is the season. Yes, there are many scholarships available to younger students, but a large amount are designated specifically for seniors. Check scholarship websites, high school career centers and websites, as well as local opportunities. There is no better time to apply—just completed college applications and essays can be the backbone to a good scholarship search.
- ☐ **Continue researching your career of interest.** Now that the pressure of applications is subsiding, it is a great time to hone your skills and interests. Students who have a solid idea of areas that interest them are more likely to have a clear plan when they get to college. Guess what that means? They are more likely to graduate on time as these students aren't as likely to be changing majors, transferring, or feeling unsure about their goals. Consider conducting an informational interview with a professional in your potential field to further validate your interest. Good college selection and good decisions on a major translate into successful students and timely grads.

TOOLS TO HELP WITH THE DECISION:

- **MOST SCHOOLS OFFER “ADMITTED STUDENT” DAYS IN APRIL. THESE ARE A GREAT WAY TO VALIDATE YOUR INTEREST IN A COLLEGE.**
- **MAP YOUR COLLEGE CHOICES AGAINST YOUR KEY COLLEGE CRITERIA TO SEE HOW EACH SCHOOL STACKS UP.**
- **IT MIGHT SEEM SIMPLISTIC, BUT USING A PRO VERSUS CON CHART CAN GIVE YOU A VISUAL PICTURE OF EACH SCHOOL. BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF.**
- **TRY RATING THE SCHOOLS FROM 1 - 10 ON DIFFERENT TOPICS. LOCATION, MAJOR, SIZE, AND ACTIVITIES, FOR EXAMPLE. SEE WHICH SCHOOLS ARE STRONGER OR WEAKER.**

DECISION TIME

Congratulations, seniors!

You completed your applications; you finished your essays, letters of recommendation, and college admission tests, and hopefully you have begun receiving acceptances. Now comes the exciting part, **Decision Time!** For some this will be easy; but for others, choosing between two or three great options can be a bit stressful. Here are some tips to help you make your choice:

- **First and foremost, remember that the deadline to decide is May 1.** Once you decide, let your college of choice know your decision and let the other schools that sent you acceptance notices know that you will not be enrolling. You may open up a much desired space for a waitlisted student!
- **Revisit the schools where you have been accepted.** Make sure these visits are in-depth — meet with department faculty and students, spend the night in the residence hall, and eat on campus. Tour any facilities that are important to you (e.g., rec center, art studio, dining facilities, theater, etc.) Take advantage of Admitted Student days in April.
- **Review your Key College Criteria.** Why did you put the college on your list in the first place? What notes do you have on the school? Ask deeper questions to help you discern which college or academic program has what you are looking for. Which school offers more assistance with job placement? Internships? How integrated is the study abroad program? Or service learning? Does the school have a strong pre-law/pre-med/pre-business school advising program?
- **Think about location.** When you graduate from college, many job recruiters will come from the area and/or state where you are located. Can you see yourself getting a job there or living there for at least several years? These factors can greatly influence where you end up living when you complete your degree.
- **Cost. Plain and simple, which school will cost you the least?** Read the financial award letters carefully. Does one school require you to take on more loans? Are there hidden costs for you such as additional travel expenses if the school is in another state or country? Check out graduation rates. Will it take you four, five, or even six years to graduate? A school that costs a little more but guarantees a four-year degree may cost you less in the long run. And colleges that are strong in job placement may help you secure a high-paying job to help pay down your debt more quickly.
- **Finally, relax.** There are many great schools that could be a fantastic choice for a student. Once you decide, dive in! Take advantage of all that the school has to offer and get involved quickly. ***Remember that it's not where you go to college that counts but what you do when you get there!*** Once you make your decision, remain connected to your portal and emails so you don't miss important deadlines. Most schools will require you to submit a deposit for housing fairly early and will give guidance on orientation, moving in, purchasing books, and scheduling your classes. Stay connected.

Notes:

