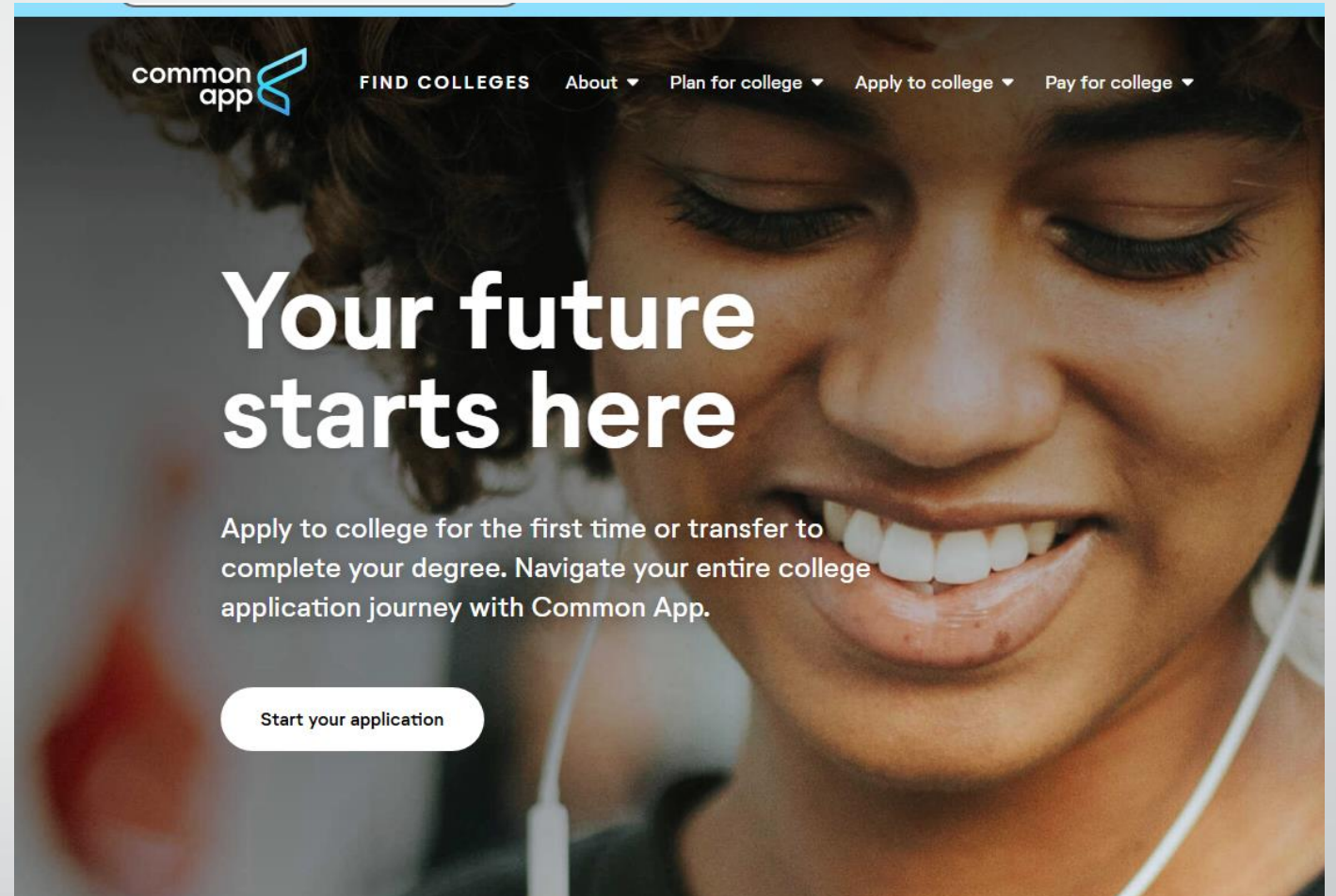


HOW TO USE THE COMMON APPLICATION TO APPLY TO COLLEGES

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

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School Counselor



What is the Common App?

- A centralized online application platform for college admissions.
- Used by over 1,000 colleges and universities worldwide.
- Allows students to apply to multiple colleges with one application.

Getting Started

1. Create and Account:

- Visit www.commonapp.org
- Select “First-Year Student”
- Fill in basic personal information



Let's get started!

Welcome to Common App! Please tell us how you will use the system so we can prepare your account. If you are unsure, we encourage you to explore each option before you continue.

Already have an account? [Go to the login page.](#)

First year student



Transfer student



Education professional



Parent or other adult



Getting Started

2. Add Colleges:

- Use the search tool to find schools of interest
- Add them to your “My Colleges” list

The screenshot shows the 'College Search' section of a website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs: 'Dashboard', 'My Colleges', 'Common App', 'College Search' (which is active), and 'Financial Aid Resources'. Below the navigation bar, the 'College Search' section has a title 'College Search' and a button 'Application Requirements'. A search input field labeled 'College or City Name' contains the text 'Princeton University'. A red arrow labeled '1' points to this input field. Below the input field, there is a note: 'Separate multiple search terms with a comma, e.g.: Washington, Boston'. A button labeled 'More filters' with a funnel icon is also present. Below the search results, it says '1 result'. A red arrow labeled '2' points to a blue plus icon next to the search result. The search result itself is a row with the text 'Princeton University' and 'Princeton, NJ - USA' below it. To the right of the result is a vertical ellipsis menu icon. The 'Sort by: College Name' dropdown is visible on the right side of the results area.

My Colleges Tab

Dashboard

My Colleges

Common App

College Search

Financial Aid Resources

My Colleges

Davidson College

Emory University

Furman University

Louisiana State University A&M- Baton Rouge

North Carolina State University

College Information

Application

Questions

Recommenders and FERPA

Review and Submit - Common App

Ole Miss - The University of

North Carolina State University





Contact Info

Phone: [\(919\) 515-2434](tel:(919)515-2434)

Email: undergrad-admissions@ncsu.edu

Address: 1210 Varsity Drive
Raleigh, NC 27606
USA

Links: [College Website](#) · [Virtual Tour](#) · [College Navigator](#)



Application Deadlines

Spring 2020

First Year

Regular Decision - 10/15/2019

Fall 2020

First Year

Early Action - 11/03/2019

Regular Decision - 01/15/2020

Other Deadline Information

If you are trying to apply for NC State's 2-year [Agricultural Institute](#) program, please visit the Office of Undergraduate Admissions' [website](#).

Sections of the Common App

The application consists of several sections:

1. Profile – Personal information, contact details, demographics
2. Family – Parent/guardian education and occupation
3. Education – High school, GPA, coursework
4. Testing – SAT, ACT, AP scores (optional for some schools)
5. Activities – Extracurriculars, leadership roles, work experience
6. Writing – Personal essay and additional college-specific essays
7. Courses & Grades – Self-reported transcript (if required)

Dashboard

My Colleges

Common App

College Search

Financial Aid Resources

Common App

✓ Profile

✓ Family

✓ Education

✓ Testing

✓ Activities

✓ Writing

✓ Courses & Grades
2 college(s) require

Profile

Personal Information

Legal first/given name*

Michael

Would you like to share a different first name that you go by? [Learn more](#)

☐ Yes

☒ No

HONORS SECTION

Honors - The Honors section is for you to put in any academic awards or achievements that you have earned starting from the ninth grade. This could include anything from a science award to an article in an economic journal. Since there are exactly five slots, if you have more than five awards, prioritize your achievements, and list the most unique and impressive ones.

If you have less than 5 awards you can stretch the definition of “academic” to include more honors, for example if you’ve won first prize in a regional or national art competition. If you have more than 5 awards, try to think of ways to combine them.

Make sure these do not overlap with the answers in your Activities section! Keep your description short and to the point, as you can only use 100 characters per award for this section.

Always put the achievement with the biggest impact on top. Make sure you do your best to take full advantage of this section.

Examples of Honors can be:

- National Merit Scholar
- Member of an Honor Society
- Award winner for writing, art, photography, music etc.
- Publication in research papers, journals, newspapers
- Athletic character recognition awards
- Any state, national or international award that you have won in high school

Dashboard

My Colleges

Common App

College Search

Financial Aid

Common App

Profile

Family

Education

Testing

Activities

Writing

Courses & Grades
0 college(s) require

Education

Preview

Current or Most Recent Secondary/High School

Other Secondary/High Schools

✓ Colleges & Universities

Grades

Current or Most Recent Year Courses

Honors

Do you wish to report any honors related to your academic achievements beginning with the ninth grade or international equivalent?*

Yes

No

Clear answer

✓ Honors 1

Honors 1 title*

Superintendent's Scholar Honor Roll

Grade level

9

10

✓ 11

✓ 12

Post-graduate

Level(s) of recognition

✓ School

State/Regional

National

International

Need help?

Need Help?

Please use the link below to look for an answer to your question. Answer questions on the forum.

[Read more](#)

ACTIVITIES SECTION

The Activities section allows you to write about up to ten activities that you've participated in throughout high school. You only get 150 characters to sum up each activity, so make sure you are optimizing the space by summarizing your role and impact in each activity.

The section asks for the following information:

- Activity type
- Position/leadership description + name of organization
- Activity description
- Participation grade levels: 9, 10, 11, 12
- Timing of participation: all year, summer, school break, etc. •

Hours spent per week

- Weeks spent per year
- Intent to continue in college: yes, no

Remember, each section is very important, not only individually, but how they work together to paint a more holistic picture of you as an applicant. Do not rush through these details.

The screenshot shows the Common App interface with the 'Activities' section selected in the left sidebar. The top navigation bar includes 'Dashboard', 'My Colleges', 'Common App', 'College Search', and 'Financial Aid'. The sidebar lists 'Profile', 'Family', 'Education', 'Testing', 'Activities' (highlighted), 'Writing', and 'Courses & Grades'. The main content area is titled 'Activities' and includes a 'Preview' button. It contains a list of activity types (Arts or music, Clubs, Community engagement, Family responsibilities, Hobbies, Sports, Work or volunteering, and Other experiences), a question 'Do you have any activities that you wish to report?' with 'Yes' selected, and a 'Clear answer' button. Below this is a section for 'Activity 1' with fields for 'Activity type*' (Student Govt./Politics), 'Position/Leadership description' (Senior Class President/Jr. Class VP), 'Organization Name' (Elizabeth High School), and a text area for 'Please describe this activity, including what you accomplished and any recognition you received, etc.' (Active member, volunteered 100 plus hours, showed leadership and commitment to improving school and community). At the bottom, 'Participation grade levels*' are selected for 11 and 12.

Dashboard My Colleges Common App College Search Financial Aid

Common App

Profile
Family
Education
Testing
Activities
Writing
Courses & Grades
0 college(s) require

Activities Preview

Reporting activities can help colleges better understand your life outside of the classroom. Examples of activities might include:

- Arts or music
- Clubs
- Community engagement
- Family responsibilities ([learn more](#))
- Hobbies
- Sports
- Work or volunteering
- Other experiences that have been meaningful to you

Do you have any activities that you wish to report? *

☒ Yes
☐ No

Clear answer

Please list your activities in the order of their importance to you.

Activity 1

Activity type*
Student Govt./Politics ✕ ▼

Position/Leadership description
(Max characters: 50)*
Senior Class President/Jr. Class VP

Organization Name
(Max characters: 100)
Elizabeth High School

Please describe this activity, including what you accomplished and any recognition you received, etc.
(Max characters: 150)*
Active member, volunteered 100 plus hours, showed leadership and commitment to improving school and community

Participation grade levels*

☐ 9
☐ 10
☒ 11
☒ 12

ACTIVITIES SECTION

In the description itself, use strong verbs and be as specific as possible. Your achievements should be tangible or quantifiable. The following are the most important points when considering what to put in your activities list:

Leadership - When listing your activities, make sure you prioritize leadership positions - whether you have started an organization, led a team, or been president of a club. The order in which you list your activities matters. Founding an organization usually takes precedence of being president of a club. If you have been a member of a common activity such as Model UN team or debate club, this should not go on top of your list of activities

Tangible Achievements - It is always very helpful to quantify your achievements as much as possible - for example if you have raised a certain amount of money for an organization, or you've helped recruit 30 members, or led a team of 20 athletes. Using numbers throughout your descriptions helps admissions officers immediately grasp the impact that you've had.

Sustained Involvement - The participation grade levels and timing/hours spent on the activity shows admissions officers exactly how much you have committed to your involvement in the activity. Longer involvement shows that you have truly dedicated the time to honing your leadership skills or nurturing community in your organization, which are skills and qualities that will help you in college

Your Application Persona - Activities should for the most part support your application persona. If the overall theme of your application, for example, surrounds an interest in art and writing, an award you might have received in chemistry would not look best on top of your activities list.

Application Fee Waivers



You may be eligible for a Common App fee waiver if you received a SAT or ACT fee waiver, are eligible or participate in the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP), live in federally-subsidized public housing or foster home or enrolled in TRIO or Upward Bound. More conditions apply.

Q: How do I get a Common App fee waiver?

A: You can use the Common App Fee Waiver section of your Profile to request a fee waiver. After you complete that section, we will ask your counselor to complete a fee waiver form to affirm your request for a fee waiver. The Common App fee waiver will apply to all your college applications.

Lunch QR Code



<https://www.nlappscloud.com/Welcome.aspx?api=8d49c6e22345738810b9269e1910fe06#loaded>

Writing the Personal Essay

- Word Limit: 250–650 words
- Choose from 7 Prompts (or create your own topic)
- Tips for a Strong Essay:
- Be authentic and tell your story
- Show, don't just tell
- Proofread and get feedback

The screenshot shows the 'Writing' section of the Common Application. On the left is a sidebar with navigation links: Profile, Family, Education, Testing, Activities, Writing (highlighted), and Courses & Grades (with a note '0 college(s) require'). The main content area is titled 'Writing' and includes a 'Preview' button. Below the title are three expandable sections: 'Personal Essay', 'Disciplinary History', and 'Additional Information' (which is currently expanded). The 'Additional Information' section contains a question: 'Do you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application?*' with radio button options for 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'. Below this is a 'Clear Answer' button. At the bottom, there is a text area for additional information with a prompt: 'You may use the space below to provide any additional information you wish to share.*'. Above the text area is a rich text editor toolbar with icons for bold (B), italic (I), underline (U), link, and a Google Drive icon.

Common Application

Writing

Preview

[View Writing Tutorial](#) ▾

Personal Essay ▾

Disciplinary History ▾

Additional Information ▴

Do you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application?*

☒ Yes

☐ No

Clear Answer

You may use the space below to provide any additional information you wish to share. *

B *I* U [Link] [Google Drive]

Choose an Application Deadline

The screenshot shows the Common App website interface. At the top, the 'common app' logo is on the left, and a user welcome box on the right says 'Welcome, Student!' with the user ID 'CAID 16328584' and email 'shelley@collegeadvisorsNE.com', along with a 'Sign Out' button. Below the logo is a navigation bar with tabs: 'Dashboard', 'My Colleges', 'Common App', 'College Search', and 'Financial Aid Resources'. The 'My Colleges' tab is active, and a sidebar on the left lists 'My Colleges' with 'Boston University' selected, followed by 'College Information', 'Application', 'Questions' (highlighted), 'Recommendations and FERPA', and 'Review and Submit - Common App'. Below these are other colleges: 'James Madison University', 'New York University', 'Northeastern University', 'Sacred Heart University', and 'Syracuse University'. The main content area is titled 'Questions' and has a 'Preview' button. Under the 'General' section, it states 'The questions on this page are being asked by Boston University'. There are three questions with dropdown menus: 'Preferred start term*' with 'September' selected, 'Preferred admission plan*' with 'Regular Decision' selected, and a third question about SAT/ACT scores with '- Choose an option -' selected. On the right side, there is a 'Need help?' section with a search icon and three links: 'Preferred Testing Plan', 'Test-Optional Policy', and 'The College of General Studies', each with a 'Read more' link.

common app

Welcome, Student!
CAID 16328584
shelley@collegeadvisorsNE.com

Sign Out

Dashboard My Colleges Common App College Search Financial Aid Resources

My Colleges

Boston University

College Information

Application

Questions

Recommendations and FERPA

Review and Submit - Common App

James Madison University

New York University

Northeastern University

Sacred Heart University

Syracuse University

Questions

Preview

General

The questions on this page are being asked by Boston University

Preferred start term*

September

Preferred admission plan*

Regular Decision

Boston University is Test-Optional. Please indicate below if you would like your SAT/ACT scores considered when we review your application.*

- Choose an option -

Need help?

Preferred Testing Plan
Applicants are required to indicate whether they would like their SAT/ACT scores taken into consideration for [Read more](#)

Test-Optional Policy
Boston University will be test-optional for first-year students applying for academic year 2023-2024. [Read more](#)

The College of General Studies
Students who wish to apply for the College of General Studies should choose the September term. On the [Read more](#)

WHICH COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS BEST SUITS YOU?

Nonrestrictive Application Plans

Regular Decision	Rolling Admission	Early Action (EA)
DEFINITION: Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time.	DEFINITION: Institutions review applications as they are submitted and render admission decisions throughout the admission cycle.	DEFINITION: Students apply early and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date.
COMMITMENT: NONBINDING	COMMITMENT: NONBINDING	COMMITMENT: NONBINDING

Students are not restricted from applying to other institutions and have until May 1 to consider their options and confirm enrollment.

Restrictive Application Plans

Early Decision (ED)	Restrictive Early Action (REA)
DEFINITION: Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted they definitely will enroll. The application deadline and decision deadline occur early.	DEFINITION: Students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision early. They may be restricted from applying ED or EA or REA to other institutions. If offered enrollment, they have until May 1 to confirm.
COMMITMENT: BINDING	COMMITMENT: NONBINDING

Students are responsible for determining and following restrictions.

Supplemental Essay

- Some colleges require additional essays or short-answer questions
- Topics may include:
- “Why this college?”
- Specific program interests
- Community involvement
- Tip: Research each college and tailor your responses

The screenshot displays a web interface for a college application. On the left, a sidebar titled 'My Colleges' lists several institutions: Clark University (selected), College Information, Application, Questions (highlighted), Recommenders and FERPA, Review and Submit - Common App, Lawrence University, Oregon State University, University of Colorado Boulder, and Willamette University. The main content area is titled 'Questions' and features a 'Preview' button. Below this, a list of question categories is shown: General, Academics, Activities (marked with a green checkmark), Contacts, and Family. The 'Writing' category is currently selected, displaying a prompt: 'Clark is known for being a rigorous academic climate that is also equally committed to being a kind and supportive community. Please describe a time in school where someone helped you become a better learner and/or a better version of yourself.' Below the prompt is a text input area with a rich text editor toolbar containing icons for bold, italic, underline, link, and image insertion.

Dashboard

Sort by: College Name ▼

Washington University in St. Louis




January 2, 2020 – 153 days until deadline


 Application – In progress


 Writing Supplement – In progress

Show more details ▲


Application Status

 Common Application – In progress

 Questions – In progress

 Recommenders and FERPA – In progress

Writing Supplement Status

 Writing Questions – In progress

Writing Requirements

Common App Personal Essay



Required

Questions

Submitting Your Application

Final Steps:

- Review all sections carefully
- Pay application fees (or request a fee waiver)
- Submit before deadlines

