

College Applications

How to make yourself stand out

Why are Applications Important?

- Your college application gives you a chance to show colleges who you are as a student and as a person
- It is a snapshot, so you want to make sure that you present your best self
- This is your one chance to stand out from the thousands of other applicants
- Most college administrators read each application very quickly, so you want to use your extracurriculars, essays, and recommendation letters to hook the reader and show them that they should accept you

Application Sections

1. Personal and Educational Data
2. Involvement/Extracurriculars
3. Test Scores
4. Essays
5. Recommendation Letters
6. Transcripts
7. Application Fees
8. Interviews

Personal Information

- Includes personal and family data
 - Name
 - Address
 - Phone number
 - Email
 - Citizenship and residency information
 - Parental information and schooling

Educational Data

- Many college applications require the name of your high school and any colleges that you received credit from
 - Knowing a student's high school allows colleges to consider number of students, types of classes offered, and prevalence of college-level classes (AP, AICE, IB, etc.); this helps them to judge your application fairly
 - Many colleges would prefer to see that a student take college-level classes at their school rather than dual enrollment courses
 - However, it is important to remember that each student is different and they must do what is best for them personally and financially
- Senior schedule and grades are often required
 - Allows colleges to gauge level of difficulty of senior year schedule
 - Colleges like to see consistency, don't want to see that you slacked off after applying

Involvement

- Involvement is a major way for students to distinguish themselves on a college application
- There are many different types of involvement:
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Volunteer activities
 - Internships
 - Summer activities (ex: volunteering abroad)
 - Employment

Extracurriculars

- Come in many forms: student government, academic teams, clubs, community service, volunteer work, athletics, research, debate, newspaper writing, etc.
- Quality over quantity
- Participating in something is sometimes not enough; instead, it is important to show leadership, commitment, and passion
- Aim to be unconventional
- Choose extracurriculars that you enjoy and that align with career goals
- Ways to stand out: start a club, win an award, get elected to a leadership position, perform community service, conduct research

Employment

- Sometimes, financial circumstances require students to work during high school to help with finances at home
 - This may prevent them from participating in other extracurricular activities
- Colleges will NOT fault a student for having a job
 - They understand that everyone's situation is different
- Balancing a job and school shows effective time management and responsibility
- Students can also utilize their work experience in essays and interviews to show that it has helped them to overcome hardships and has shaped them into a better person

Test Scores

- Most students begin taking the SAT and/or ACT during junior year
- If they are unhappy with their scores, they can choose to continue taking them at the beginning of senior year
- Scores are often sent electronically and there is often a small fee to send scores
- Most colleges expect to receive scores by their application deadline
- Scores take about 2-3 weeks to arrive at admissions offices, so plan ahead

Recommendation Letters

- Letters of recommendation show a different side to a student and help to set them apart beyond grades and test scores
- They should describe positive personality traits (integrity, leadership, curiosity, creativity, empathy, perseverance, motivation, ambition, collaboration, confidence, etc.)
- They should NOT be a summary of your resume
- Most schools require 1-2 recommendations
- Choose people who know you well and who can talk about your personal qualities and ambition
- It helps if they know you as a person, not just a student

Getting Organized

- A little planning goes a long way in making sure your application is the best that it can be
- Establish your passions before senior year
 - Colleges would rather see that you dive deep into a few interests than just do something because it looks good for a resume
- Start early
 - Essays, recommendation letters, and forms can take time to complete, especially once senior year classes start
 - Use the summer before senior year to get a head start on essays and applications
- Be consistent
 - Make sure that the name and information on each application matches
 - If you use a nickname, use it on every application
- Alert your school of the colleges that you apply to so that send transcripts

it can

Application Tips

- Complete the entire application, even the optional sections
- Be neat and organized
- Have a strong essay that tells a story about yourself, hook the reader
 - Have a teacher or advisor proofread for you
- Don't be cliché
- Be honest about your scores and involvement
- Demonstrate interest in the schools to which you apply
- Make an impact, be different
- Check and recheck your application before you hit submit

Finishing Strong

- Mail everything a few weeks before the application is due
- After submitting, ensure that you received an automated response that your application has been received
- Keep physical copies of each piece of your application
- Save passwords, notes, and emails from admissions offices
- Check in with the admission office through college fairs, campus visits, and occasional calls to show interest
 - This is NOT the same as nagging—don't do that
- Stay on top of schoolwork and extracurriculars
- Be patient and stay positive!

Link to Resources

[7 Tips to Ace College Applications](#)

[Tips for Preparing Your College Application](#)

[10 Application Tips You Need to Know](#)