



# A BETTER CHANCE

## **A Better Chance Online Application FAQs and Guidelines**

Thank you for your interest in A Better Chance! If you are reading this message, you are a parent who is heavily invested in ensuring that your child receives the best education possible. We look forward to becoming a valued partner. The first step towards that goal is the completion of our online application.

At first glance, you may be concerned about when you will find the time to complete the application in its entirety. In reality, the application has multiple components that are to be completed by different people. So the amount of time that any one person must invest is not as significant as it may initially appear. You can also start and then save the application to return to it at a later time. The hardest part is coordinating the various pieces in a timely manner so that you can submit the completed application on time. Thus, we recommend starting as soon as possible.

We have created this guide to help you navigate through the application. We have provided answers to the most common questions that may arise as you complete your A Better Chance application. This guide should equip you with the information necessary to troubleshoot any technical issues that you may experience, as well as answer some general questions you may have about submitting application items.

Please read through this document carefully and follow the tips and recommendations. We believe that this information will assist you with the planning and completion of the required components.

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## For Applicants and Parents

### CREATING AN ACCOUNT/LOGIN HELP

Throughout this application process, emails will be used as the primary source of communication between you and A Better Chance. We strongly urge you to add [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) as an email contact to any/all email addresses you intend to use within the scope of the application process. This will ensure that none of our emails are blocked or go to your junk/spam mail.

**Q.** How do I create an account?

**A.** Visit our website [www.abetterchance.org](http://www.abetterchance.org) and click on “Apply Now.” When redirected to the application site, **use an email address that you check regularly to create the account for the application and be sure to list this email address on the application as well.** We encourage you to bookmark or save the application page/link so that you can access the site at a later time.

**Q.** I created a password, but I am not able to log in

**A.** Your password must meet the requirements (minimum of eight [8] characters and cannot include these symbols: “@” or “#”) else you will not be able to log in. Reset your password by clicking “Help: I forgot my password” from the log in page.

**Q.** I created an account but haven’t received an email confirmation to begin the application

**A.** Check your junk/spam folder. If the email isn’t there, try again to create an account. Verify that your email address is entered correctly.

**Q.** I have created an account but I do not know how to begin completing the application

**A.** You must first “**Add an Applicant**” from the Action Items page in order to access the application. Make sure that you are on the Action Items page by clicking the “Apply” tab located at the top of the webpage. Click “Complete Form” to access the application and supporting documents.

**Q.** Can I use login information from a previous application to complete a new application?

**A.** Yes, you may use your login email and password from a previous application to access the current one. However, you will be completing an entirely new application for each applicant.

**Q.** I began filling out the application form, but when I tried to log back in at a later time it shows that my email/password is invalid

**A.** **You must enter the same email address and password that you used to create your account.** If you used an invalid password to create your account (less than 8 characters/containing the @ or # symbol), click “Help, I forgot my password” to send password reset instructions to your email.

**Q.** The application site won’t load/an error message appears when I try to access the site

**A.** Try the following: Refreshing the webpage; using a different browser; using a different computer/device; or using a computer on a different network/internet connection (i.e. if you are trying access the site at work, try doing it when you are at home, or vice versa. Your internet connection or network may be blocking the site.)

## MONITORING APPLICATION ITEMS AND REQUIREMENTS

We have created a chart which lists the application components, parties responsible, and the estimated timeframe you should allot to its completion. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the application items and what is required for you to submit them. The items in the chart below are listed in the order in which they appear on the Action Items page of your online application portal.

Item	Application Component	What is Required	Instructions	Timeframe to Complete <sup>1</sup>	Tips
1	<b>Online Form: Parent/Guardian Section</b>	Applicant and Parent Information School History Questionnaire Declaration	Click "Complete Form" on the Action Items page to access the application  For Proof of Income upload Click "Choose File" to select a file, then click "Upload"	40 – 80 minutes total	You can save and return to this form at any time. You must click submit once you are done  Provide financial information for <b>any/all</b> parents or guardians that you list on the application
	<b>Online Form: Proof of Income Upload</b>	First 2 pages of current tax return-Form 1040 AND/OR Current employer-issued W2 or 1099 Form Proof of government assistance		Will vary depending on your access to these documents	
	<b>Online Form: Applicant Section</b>	Activities & Interests Academics Short Answers Essay		2 hours – 5 hours total	
2	<b>Supporting Documents: Photo</b>	A recent shoulder-length portrait style photo of the applicant	Click "Choose File" to select a file, then click "Upload"	2 minutes	Please note the photo specifications provided on the Supporting Documents page
	<b>Supporting Documents: Green Card</b>	A photocopy of the applicant's green card (if applicant is a permanent resident)	Click "Choose File" to select a file, then click "Upload"	Allow enough time to scan a copy of this document	Make sure uploaded document is legible
	<b>Supporting Documents: Transcripts</b>	Current Year AND Previous Year transcripts	Click "Choose File" to select a file, then click "Upload"	Allow enough time to request, scan, and upload the required documents	Use the transcript request form to obtain your child's academic records from his/her school
	<b>Supporting Documents: Standardized Test</b>	Previous Year standardized testing	Click "Choose File" to select a file, then click "Upload"	Allow enough time to request, scan, and upload the required documents	Use the transcript request form to obtain your child's academic records from his/her school, if necessary
3	<b>Recommendations</b>	Core Academic Teacher Recommendation	Click "Send Request" and submit the email address of the person you wish to complete the recommendation	Give the teacher/principal/counselor at least 2 weeks' notice to complete	Inform teachers and principals/counselors beforehand that you will be requesting a recommendation
		Principal/Counselor Recommendation			
5	<b>Benchmark Testing</b>	Registration for Testing	You will receive an email for Benchmark Testing after submitting the online application ( <b>Item 1</b> on this list)	Applicants should be registered for Benchmark Testing by the application due date	Submit the online application form as soon as possible so that you may receive information to register for benchmark testing

<sup>1</sup> Please note that these are only estimated Completion Times

Q. [How will I know if A Better Chance receives my application/required items?](#)

A. **The application is self-managed, which means that applicants are responsible for monitoring the submission and receipt of all their items.** You are able to check the status of all your application materials using the online portal. Once processed, a check mark will appear to the left of these items. Depending on the volume of applications being processed, it may take 1-3 weeks for items to be received and processed.

Q. [How do I submit the application?](#)

A. There are different parts to the application and all parts are available on the Action Items page, along with instructions or access provided to the right of each item. Once you've added an applicant(s), you can access the application and supporting documents by clicking on "Complete Form." **The Application and Supporting Documents forms include multiple pages/components.**

Make sure that you fill out all required fields, which are noted with \*. **You can save the application and supporting document forms at any time and come back to it later, but once you click "Submit", it cannot be edited.** Click the submit button once you are done.

We strongly suggest that you submit the application form as soon as possible. You may submit it before we receive other supporting documents for the application.

Q. [I submitted my application materials and these items have not been checked off](#)

A. In order for items to be checked off on your portal, **you must submit the online form first.** If you submitted recommendations, transcripts, or your finances before submitting the online application, we cannot process them, and they cannot be checked off. **We strongly urge you to submit the online application prior to the deadline so that all items can be processed in a timely manner. Please note that depending on the volume of applications being processed, it may take 1-3 weeks for items to be received and processed.**

Q. [Can I fax application materials?](#)

A. We DO NOT accept application materials via fax. Documents must be submitted using the method outlined in the instructions for each section.

## BENCHMARK TESTING

**Q. What is Benchmark Testing?**

A. The benchmark test is a previously issued SSAT exam that is used specifically to determine potential standardized testing scores on the actual test (which students who are accepted to the Cohort will sit in the fall).

**Q. When do I receive information about Benchmark testing?**

A. You will receive information about registration for the Benchmark Test via email after submitting online application form. All applicants are expected to test. **You must submit the online application form before you receive information for testing.** If you don't receive an email regarding testing within a week of submitting your application, contact the Admissions Team at [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) or 646-346-1310

**Q. How important is Benchmark Testing?**

A. Benchmark testing is an important part of the reviewing process, but will not by itself lead to the student being accepted to, or denied from, the program. We evaluate all parts of the application and weight them accordingly to make an informed decision about each student's application.

**Q. How can I prepare for the test?**

A. Though we don't expect applicants to do much studying for this particular test, you can familiarize yourself with the test format and questions by visiting the SSAT website <https://ssat.org/prepare> to review practice questions and information about the test.

**Q. My child is registered for the Benchmark Test but it isn't checked off on the portal**

A. The testing requirement will be checked off after students sit for the test.

**Q. I did not receive an email about Benchmark Testing.**

A. Double-check all email addresses associated with your A Better Chance application. Be sure to check all junk and spam folders.

**Q. Will I receive results for Benchmark Testing?**

A. Yes. There is approximately a three week turnaround for test results. Once A Better Chance receives these scores, you will receive an email explaining your child's results.

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The Supporting Documents section includes the Student's: Photo, Green Card, Transcripts, and Standardized Testing that must be uploaded to the Supporting Documents page. When you submit the online form, our Admissions Team reviews these documents. If all required documents were uploaded, your form will be processed in 2-4 weeks and a check mark will appear on the Action Items page next to the Supporting Documents checkbox.

### PHOTO

Be sure to note the specifications for application photos. If the applicant is accepted to A Better Chance, this will be the photo that appears on the application that we send to our Member Schools.

Do not upload photos in which:

- Are taken too close up or from too far away (selfies).
- One or both of your eyes are not visible or blocked (for example, if you are wearing sunglasses).
- Multiple faces are shown in the photo and your face is not visible or recognizable.
- Poor photo quality makes the person shown unrecognizable.
- You are wearing a hat or head covering (that is not worn for religious purposes).
- You are wearing revealing clothing.
- Your photo has been tampered with or digitally altered.
- Some or all of your head is cut off in the photo.
- Your photo is too blurry or light
- You are taking a picture of another picture of yourself

### GREEN CARD

You are only required to upload a copy of your green card if you indicated that the applicant was a permanent resident of the United States. Please scan a copy of the applicant's green card. Do not take pictures of your green card, as these are often illegible.

### TRANSCRIPTS & STANDARDIZED TESTING

You must obtain school-issued copies or transcripts/report cards. You may request them directly from the school, if you have not already received copies of your child's report from the school. Please note that the quality of the documents you submit is important to reading your child's file. **DO NOT take pictures of the applicant's transcripts. Please scan and upload hard copies.**

**Q.** My child's school does not provide transcripts. What should I do?

**A.** Please be advised that the transcripts we request are equivalent to grades/report cards, as well as standardized testing history for the **student's current school year AND (immediate) previous school year** (not their complete school history.) Transcripts should include grades/reports from

all requested terms/quarters/semesters/marking periods, as well as available final grades for that year. Testing/Attendance history alone DOES NOT satisfy the transcript requirement.

**Q. My child's school does not have his/her transcripts/report cards available.**

A. Find out from a school official where you would be able to request your child's transcripts (grades and testing history). It may be that you have to contact your school district or your state department of education.

If after doing this you are still unable to obtain them, then in some cases you may send your own copies of the applicant's transcripts/report cards, complete with all the requested information. However, A Better Chance reserves the right to not accept parent/family copies of report cards if they do not satisfy our extensive transcript requirements.

**Q. What Standardized Test are you requesting?**

A. This refers to any city or state testing that has been administered by the applicant's school in the previous school year.

**Q. What if I opted out of city/state testing or my child hasn't taken any standardized tests?**

A. If your child does not have any standardized testing from the previous school year, you may upload testing for the year before that. If your child does not have any standardized testing reports available for the past two years, you may disregard the standardized testing request.

**Q. My child has transferred schools in the past two (2) years. Which transcripts should I send?**

A. We need both the current grade transcript and the previous grade transcript. Your child's current school may already have his/her records from the previous school and so they can submit both to us. However, in other cases you will need to get in contact with your child's previous school(s) to request transcripts.

**Q. My child is homeschooled, what should I submit for transcripts?**

A. Protocol for transcripts is essentially the same for homeschooled students. We do require documented proof of grades for the student's current year and previous year for the classes they have taken, including available test/exam history. As your child's primary teacher, you may be the one responsible for keeping those records. Similarly, if in your homeschooling program there is a "homeschool program overseer," then that person may also provide the student's transcript information.



## PROOF OF INCOME

Q. Why do you need my financial documents?

A. A Better Chance reviews financial information as a part of the application to ensure that we are serving those candidates who are eligible and most require our services. Additionally, many of the schools we partner with also request income verification at a later time in the application.

Q. Who needs to submit Proof of Income information?

A. **Any parent/legal guardian** listed on the application who:

- plays an active role in the student's life,
- and is financially responsible for the student

Q. Which forms do I need to submit?

A. **We require the first two pages of your application year Federal Tax Return (1040 Form) – note this is the income tax form due April of the application year.** If you will not be filing taxes, or your taxes are not yet available, you may also submit you **1)** current W2 or 1099 form(s) or **2)** any proof of government assistance.

If you will not be able to submit the appropriate form by our April 15<sup>th</sup> deadline, please contact the Admissions Team at [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) and include a note that explains your particular situation.

When submitting the required pages of the 1040, please note that:

(1)

**The applicant should be listed as a dependent on the 1040 form that is submitted. Be sure to ALWAYS note the name of student(s) applying to the program when you submit your documents to A Better Chance.**

(2)

**We require financial documentation for ALL parents/guardians who are listed on the A Better Chance application. If parents/guardians filed separately, BOTH are required to submit a 1040.**

(3)

Please do not send your entire tax return and note that **cover pages/transcripts for taxes alone will not be accepted.** Please click on the following link to view the required pages for the 1040:

<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1040.pdf>

Q. I sent in my tax forms, but it hasn't been checked off on the portal

A. Remember that it may take up to 3 weeks for us to receive and process application materials. If after this time they still aren't reflected on your online portal, then it may be because:

- You listed more than one parent/guardian on the application, but didn't send tax information for both
- You sent incorrect forms/section of forms, or tax information from the wrong year

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Before sending recommendation requests, you should already have notified teachers/school staff to expect the request. We advise all school faculty and staff who will be involved in helping your student complete the A Better Chance application to add [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) to their email contact list. This will prevent our emails from being blocked or going to their junk/spam mail, especially if you will be sending a recommendation request to their school/work email address.**

**Q. Can a teacher/principal/counselor mail or email their letter of recommendation for the student to A Better Chance?**

A. A Better Chance will not accept written or emailed letters of recommendation. The form that we have created includes specific questions meant for assessing a student's achievements, performance, and behaviors in a given subject/setting. Additionally, our referral process requires all application materials to be received in a particular format. If school faculty/staff is experiencing trouble completing a recommendation form, you or that person should reach out to our Admissions Team at [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org). Please include the applicant's name in the subject of the email.

**Q. My child's school does not provide recommendations.**

A. If your child's school does not provide recommendations, please communicate this to our Admissions Team at [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) immediately so that any possible alternatives may be discussed with your Program Manager. We do generally request that the school provide a copy of their recommendation policy.

**Q. My child is homeschooled. Who should submit recommendations?**

A. We often ask that the principal/counselor recommendation be completed by a "homeschool program overseer," if in your homeschooling program there is a person who certifies completion, or authenticates teaching has been completed with sufficiency. For instance, an online homeschooling platform might get a principal recommendation from the online program supervisor. We generally are trying to place the student in the context of their peers with this recommendation.

As for the teacher recommendation, we often allow the homeschooling teacher (parent) to complete this, but also *encourage* an outside recommendation in addition to these two requirements. This helps us see greater breadth and an outside perspective to the student's achievements, successes, and character. Often this additional recommendation will come from a music teacher, community service supervisor, etc. If you should complete an additional recommendation, please be sure to have the recommendation come directly from the recommender (to ensure confidentiality) and have them note in the email or mailed letter that this is intended to serve as an additional letter to be added to the applicant's application because they are homeschooled (this will aid in processing). They should also include the applicant's name in the subject of the email if it is being emailed.

- Q. Who can submit the Principal/Counselor recommendation?**
- A. This recommendation may be submitted by a person at your child’s school who is in an administrative role. This includes: Assistant Principal, Vice Principal, School Counselor, Guidance Counselor, Placement Counselor, Dean, School Director, School Psychologist, School Social Worker, and Grade Advisor. If you wish to request a principal/counselor recommendation from someone who does not fit into one of these roles, email [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) before you request the recommendation to determine if it will be accepted. **Coaches, club advisors, and officials from outside the school setting cannot complete this recommendation.**
- Q. I submitted recommendation requests, but the teacher/principal/counselor did not receive it.**
- A. Check with the teacher/school staff to ensure that you have the correct email address, and then check if you entered the email address correctly in the recommendation request field. If the correct email address was entered, try resending the request using “Edit Request.” Instruct anyone you send the request to that they should add [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) to their email contact list to prevent emails from being blocked or going to their junk/spam folder.
- Q. I want to change the person I sent my child’s recommendation request to. What do I do?**
- A. Go to the Action Items page of your online application and do the following:
- Click on “**Edit Request**” next to the recommendation you wish to change
  - Select the “**Cancel this request**” button and then click “**Submit**.” This will cancel the existing request and take you back to the Action Items page
  - From there, click the “**Send Request**” link next to the same recommendation, enter the new email address, and then click “**Submit**”
- Q. I sent the recommendation request to the wrong person but I am not able to change it.**
- A. You will not be able to send a new recommendation request if that teacher/principal/counselor has already submitted the recommendation. The recommendation status will say either “submitted” or “received.” Contact the Admissions Team ([admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org)) for further assistance.
- Q. The recommendation form was submitted by the wrong person. What do I do?**
- A. Send an email to [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) with the subject line “Recommendation Help.” Make sure to include the student’s full name and which recommendation was completed incorrectly. We will notify you when the recommendation is reset, and you will be able to log into your account and submit a new request (*please note that the need to reset WILL slow your application processing considerably*).
- Q. I currently have more than one child applying to A Better Chance (or) I have had more than one child apply to A Better Chance, and when I send a recommendation request, it goes to the wrong applicant’s teacher/principal/counselor.**
- A. You should be using the same account to submit an application for your children, but each student should have his/her own profile. Make sure that you select the student’s name under the “Applicants” section so that you are submitting applications and recommendations for the correct student.

- Q. A teacher/school staff member is trying to complete my recommendation, but they encounter a message that says they are not allowed to complete the form.
- A. This is because someone has already submitted that recommendation. It is likely that you sent the same request to more than one person. **Only the last person you sent the request to is able to complete the recommendation.** Anyone else you sent a request to before will have their access cancelled. If you realize that a request was sent to and completed by the wrong person, contact A Better Chance to have that recommendation reset (*please note that the need to reset WILL slow your application processing considerably*).
- Q. A teacher/school staff member encounters a message that says “Invalid or expired link” when they try to complete my recommendation.
- A. Instruct them to ignore the message and log into the recommendation portal with the email address you sent their request to and the password associated with the account. If they cannot recall the password or have trouble gaining access to the site, then they should click on “Help: I forgot my password” to have password reset instructions sent to that email address. If neither of these works, have them reach out the Admissions Team at [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org).
- Q. My child’s teacher/principal/counselor says they submitted the recommendation, but it isn’t checked off on my portal.
- A. Use the guidelines below to address this issue. If none of them work, contact the Admissions Team at [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org).
- Make sure that the person completing the recommendation did not misinterpret the instructions – **we will not accept mailed or emailed letters of recommendation. They must be submitted via the online form.**
  - Check the status message next to each recommendation to monitor its status:
    - **“Request Sent”** means that you have sent the request, but the teacher/counselor has not begun completing the form yet
    - **“In Progress”** means that the teacher/counselor has started the form, but hasn’t submitted yet
    - **“Submitted”** means the teacher/counselor has completed the form and it is in queue to be processed by our Admissions Team
    - **“Received”** means that our Admissions Team has processed the recommendation form
  - Check your recommendation requests to ensure that you entered the correct spelling of the email address for the teacher/principal/counselor.
  - Only the last person you sent the recommendation request to can complete the form. If you cancelled one request to send a new one to another email address, then the previous person(s) will be unable to complete the recommendation. You are able to check who the current request was sent to by clicking the “edit request” link next to that particular recommendation. Please note: If the recommendation was completed by the previous recommender, and you cancel the request, the completed recommendation will be deleted.

- Confirm with the applicant's teacher/counselor if they received your emailed recommendation request. **They need to create an online account using the same email address that you entered and sent their request to.**
- The person completing the recommendation should have followed the link in their email request to either create a password or log into the recommendation site. **They should not be "Creating an account" from the log in page the same way you did to start the application. They should not be using *your* email address or password to access the recommendation site.**
- If the email address the teacher/counselor used to log into their recommendation site is different from what you entered and sent their recommendation request to, then A Better Chance will not be able to see that recommendation. *Recommendations are linked to the email address to which the recommendation request was sent.* If this is the case, email the Admissions Team at [admissions@abetterchance.org](mailto:admissions@abetterchance.org) to have the recommendation reset.
- If at any point in time you cancelled a recommendation request and sent it again to the same person, that recommender will see more than one recommendation in their account. You will only be able to monitor the recommendation on your online portal if the person completes the last recommendation you sent. If not, the recommendation status will remain as "request sent."