

High school details information sheet

How to use this resource

In the Common App all students need to answer several questions about their high school and counselor. However, not all students know this information or where to find it. This sheet will help you collect and easily share these details with your students.

All you need to do is fill out the information in the fields that follow and distribute the sheet to your students.

FAQs

How do students report GPA scale in the application?

The GPA scale appears as a drop down menu in the application, with options of 4 through 20 and 100. If your school doesn't calculate a cumulative numerical GPA, or if it uses a GPA scale that is different than the options available, select "N/A". This information is not required in the application.

My school calculates both weighted and unweighted GPA. Which should students select?

In this case, students should report the weighted value.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

For more information, visit our Solutions Center at recsupport.commonapp.org or email us at sfsupport@commonapp.net.

Understanding the Testing section in Common App



The Testing section lets you self-report scores of any standardized tests you've taken. Standardized tests are any form of test that requires all test takers to answer the same questions in the same way, and that is scored in a "standard" or consistent manner.

Each college and university can choose their own testing policy. If you're deciding which tests to take (or which to report), double check the policies of the colleges you're applying to. College's testing requirements are listed on their College Information page. The Requirements Grid also shows you each college's and testing requirements.

College testing policies

Always required:

Standardized test scores are always a required part of the application.

Sometimes required:

Standardized test scores are sometimes required as part of the application. Check a college's College Information page for specific details.

Never required:

Standardized test scores are never a required part of the application.

Flexible:

This means alternatives to standardized test scores (like a graded paper) may be accepted. Colleges with this policy may also accept different types of tests, like AP tests. Be sure you check the college's website for more information.

Standardized tests you can report in Common App

College admission tests:

- ACT
- SAT

Subject tests:

- SAT Subject Tests
- AP Subject Tests
- IB Subject Tests
- Cambridge Tests

English proficiency tests:

- TOEFL
- PTE Academic
- IELTS
- Duolingo English Test

**Ignored:**

Standardized test scores are ignored if they are received.

If you do plan to report standardized test scores, keep in mind these scores are self-reported and not official. Official test scores will still need to be sent to colleges through the testing agency.

As you begin filling out your Common App, remember that you have some flexibility in the Testing section. You can choose how to complete this section and which colleges receive your test scores. This is especially useful if you are applying to colleges with different testing policies.

Did you know?

You can search for colleges based on their testing requirements.

To remove test scores all you need to do is go to the Tests Taken section and remove the test(s) you selected. If you don't plan on submitting any scores to a college, answer that "No" you do not want to self-report scores. That will complete the section and remove any information you had previously entered from any future submissions.

Don't worry! The information you entered won't completely disappear. To add your previously entered test scores, answer "Yes", you would like to report scores. Then, add back the test you had listed before. The sections will reappear, along with your answers.

For more information about filling out the Testing section, visit our help resources at commonapp.org/help.

Telling your story

How to approach the essay



The Common App essay instructions ask you what you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores. You have 7 prompts but endless possibilities to tell your story. Here are some ideas to inspire your thinking.



Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, please share your story.

Think about

- Your community, environment, family, and culture
- What you're deeply curious about and how you spend your time
- What makes you proud
- People and experiences that have shaped your life

Ask yourself

- What's missing from the rest of my application?
- Is there context to help colleges understand who I am?



The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Think about

- All obstacles: big, small, personal, and societal
- Hardships faced by family or friends that also impacted you
- Unresolved challenges you're still struggling with

Ask yourself

- How did I cope? How did I grow?
- Who helped me?



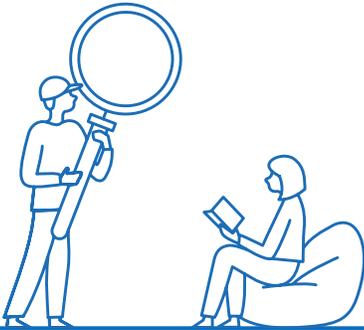
Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

Think about

- Anywhere you spend time: school, clubs, work, home, place of worship
- Everyone you interact with: friends, teammates, family, teachers, coaches

Ask yourself

- Did the experience clarify or change my values?
- What was the impact on my relationships?
- Did I surprise myself—or anyone else?



Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?

Think about

- All types of interaction: Compliments, criticism, gifts, advice, support
- People who know you well and people who don't

Ask yourself

- What made the interaction surprising?
- How did I feel?
- How did I react?



Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

Think about

- The full range of your achievements, both public and private
- Small or everyday experiences that had a powerful impact on you
- Times when you were surprised by what you learned or discovered

Ask yourself

- How did I change?
- How can I continue to grow?
- How can I share what I learned with others?



Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

Think about

- How you choose to spend your free time
- Your hobbies, your classes
- What you read, what you write, what you create

Ask yourself

- How did my curiosity start?
- What does this interest tell others about me?
- What does this interest tell me about myself?



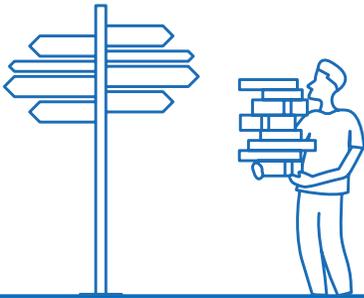
Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Think about

- What you want to share, not what you think colleges want to hear
- Topics that reveal who you are and what matters to you

Ask yourself

- Does this essay provide new information to my colleges?
- Is there anything left unsaid in my application?



Thank you to former high school college advisor Alice Kleeman and the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Making Caring Common Project for their inspiration and contributions to this resource.



Approaching the Activities section

The Activities section is one of the seven sections of the Common App tab. In it you have the chance to tell colleges more about who you are outside the classroom. You can use this section to highlight the activities that have been the most meaningful to you throughout high school.

Take a moment to reflect on what types of activities you may want to include. Did you have family responsibilities, a job, internship, or volunteer work? What about hobbies or sports?

Use this space to jot down an activity or two you might want to share.

You can add up to ten activities to your application, but that doesn't mean that you need to enter ten. On average, students applying through Common App report 6 activities.

Don't forget, this section is how colleges can get to know more about you. It can show what makes you unique: your pursuits, interests, and passions. Focus on what activities can best tell that story and not on the number you're reporting.

The Activities section is one of our team's favorite sections of the application. Activities add persona to an application; they demonstrate an applicant's interests outside of the classroom and allow us a glimpse into that applicant's passions, further demonstrating how that individual may enhance our student community.

—Adelphi University (Garden City, NY)



How it works

First, you'll select your activity type. If your activity type isn't listed, you can choose "other club/activity" from the dropdown menu. You can give more details in the position/leadership and activity description fields.

Next, you'll briefly describe the activity and your position. You have limited space in these fields, so you may need to abbreviate words and simplify your grammar.

Characters allowed:

- 50 characters – Position/Leadership description
- 100 characters – Organization name
- 150 characters – Activity details, honors won, and accomplishments

Example activity descriptions

Original

For two years I volunteered at my local animal shelter. I helped out where needed, but mainly walked dogs and monitored the front desk. Last year I was asked to take on more responsibility and have been volunteering as the receptionist during the weekends. (256 characters)

Edited

Volunteer at local animal shelter walking dogs and running front desk. Given more responsibility last year and now volunteer as receptionist. (141 characters)

The edited version fits the character limit and still gives the important details. The time spent on the activity has been taken out, because that information is reported elsewhere in the section.

For each activity you'll provide the hours spent per week on the activity, and then the weeks spent per year. If you can't remember the exact details, like the time spent on an activity, it's alright to give your best guess.

For more information, visit our Solution Center at appsupport.commonapp.org