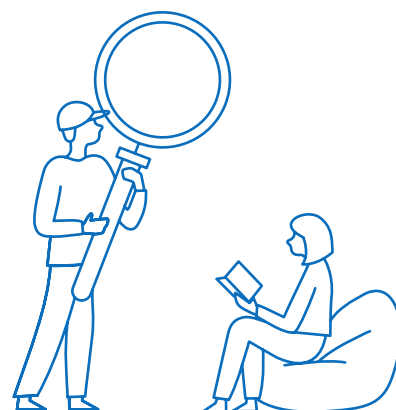


Application Dictionary

**TR**

Academic Recommendation

A recommendation submitted by a college academic advisor, professor, dean or instructor who oversees your college academic progress.

Admission plan

An admission plan is the schedule and method by which colleges and universities accept and review applications, and notify applicants of their decisions. Examples of admissions plans include Early Action, Early Decision, and Regular Decision.

TR

Adult Student

An adult learner (also known as a returning student, adult student, or returning adult) is typically 25 years of age or older, and has delayed their post-secondary education for reasons such as family obligations, work responsibilities, and military service.

FY

Advisor

A recommender role that lets you share your in-progress application with a trusted individual. Advisors can keep track of your progress, though they don't submit any forms on your behalf.

Application Fee

The fee a college charges you to apply to their institution. The amount varies from one college to the next. See Fee Waivers.

CBO (Community Based Organization)

A not-for-profit college access organization that offers free advising for students.

CEEB Code

A unique identification number assigned to high schools and colleges by the College Board. Some international schools may not have an assigned CEEB code.

Index

FY

First year specific term

TR

Transfer specific term



Citizenship

Your status as a person recognized under the custom or law as being a member of a state or country. Depending on your citizenship status you may be asked to provide additional information.

Coed

Used to describe a college that offers the integrated education of male and female students in the same environment. You can filter by coed colleges in the College Search tab.

TR

College Report

Collects information about your standing at your current institution. You may need to gather this information from more than one official at your institution, such as the advisor, dean, or registrar.

College Specific Questions

Questions that colleges ask in addition to the information collected in the Common App tab of the application. This includes the start term and admission plan you'd like to apply for.

Common App ID (CAID)

A unique 8 digit numeric identifier that colleges use to match your materials with your application. You can find your unique CAID in the top right corner of your account.

Common App

The name of our online system used by students to apply to member colleges and universities across the country and around the world.

The name of the non-profit membership organization.

Community College

A two-year post-secondary institution that offers associates degrees. Students that have received their high school diploma or earned a GED can enroll in a community college. Students who earn their associates degree at a community college can transfer to a four-year college or university to earn their bachelor's degree.

FY

Counselor

An individual who provides academic, career, and college readiness to all K-12 students through a school counseling program. The counselor is also responsible for submitting your transcripts to colleges.

**FY**

Counselor Recommendation

A broad-based assessment written by your counselor to address things like your academic, extracurricular, and personal characteristics.

CSS Profile

The CSS Profile is required by many private colleges and universities to determine your eligibility for non-government financial aid, which includes grants, loans, and scholarships from a college. Be sure to visit The College Board website for more information.

Deadline

The date by which you must submit your application materials. All deadlines are in your local time zone.

Early Action (EA)

An application process to apply and receive a decision earlier than the Regular Decision notification date. Unlike Early Decision (ED), EA is “non-binding” and you have no obligation to enroll and will have until May 1 to consider the offer and confirm your enrollment.

Early Decision (ED)

A “binding” application process by which you commit to enrolling in a certain college if you’re admitted. You can apply to other colleges, but only apply ED to one college. If admitted, you must withdraw your other applications.

Essay

The “personal essay” or “personal statement” within the Common App gives you the chance to tell your story and to show off your writing skills. Not every college requires the essay and you can filter by this requirement in the College Search tab.

Evaluation

A writing prompt that your teachers and non-academic recommenders can use to elaborate on what they think colleges should know about you.

FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is used to determine your eligibility for federal, state, and college-sponsored financial aid. This includes grants, educational loans, and work-study programs. Be sure to visit the FAFSA website for more information.

Fee Waivers

A request to the college to remove the application fee. Using either the Common App fee waiver, which your counselor must confirm, or a college-specific fee waiver, you will not



be required to pay the fee to submit your application.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is a federal law that protects your education records. To learn more, visit the U.S. Department of Education.

FY

Final Report

A form submitted by your high school counselor that typically summarizes your academic performance from freshman year to the end of your senior year of high school. The Final Report is the last form your counselor will submit.

Financial Aid

Funding in the form of grants and loans to help you pay for education-related expenses including tuition, room and board, textbooks, and supplies for college.

First Year

You are a First Year applicant if you will be completing high school this academic year or if you have never enrolled at a college or university. Please check with the colleges you applied to see which application type is best for you.

Gap Year

A break you take in your formal education, typically between graduating from high school and starting college.

GPA (Grade Point Average)

The academic performance measurement calculated based on your grades. Many high schools calculate GPA differently. While you can self-report this information, your counselor will submit official transcripts as part of their forms.

High School

The name used in the United States for a secondary school with students between grades 9–12.

TR

High School Official Recommendation

A recommendation submitted by a high school counselor or school official which also includes a copy of the final high school transcript.

International Applicant

Any applicant who is not a US resident is considered an international applicant by the Common App. Colleges might require different information from their international



applicants, so be sure to check their website for more information.

Matriculation

The formal process of entering a college or of becoming eligible to enter college by completing certain academic requirements.

TR

Mid Term Report

Collects information about courses in which you are currently enrolled. Please print the form and follow the instructions provided before mailing to each of your colleges.

FY

Mid Year Report

Submitted by your counselor, this form usually summarizes your academic performance through the middle of your final year of high school.

FY

Optional Report

A “just in case” form that your counselor can submit if they want or need to.

FY

Other Recommender

A type of recommender that lets you invite coaches, employers, etc. to support your application for admission. Be sure to check the college’s Other Recommender requirements.

TR

Personal Recommendation

A recommendation submitted by someone who can speak to your character and abilities.

Portfolio

A supplemental form used to showcase your special talents in one or more subjects. Certain colleges will require a portfolio to complete your application.

TR

Prerequisites

A course or program that needs to be completed before you are able to apply to a program.

TR

Professional Recommendation

A recommendation submitted by an individual you know from a professional experience, like a job or internship.

TR

Program

A listing of academic areas or majors that share the same admissions requirements. One college can offer multiple programs in the Common App for transfer.



Recommenders

Individuals you invite to complete assessments to support your application for admission. There are several different types of recommenders you can invite through the Common App. Remember to check each college's recommendation requirements, since they vary from college to college.

Regular Decision (RD)

An application process in which you apply by a specific date and then receive an admission decision within a stated period of time.

Restrictive Early Action (REA)

Similar to Early Action, applying for REA requires that you submit your application earlier than Regular Decision (RD). As a result, you will receive your admission decision earlier than you would receive a RD decision. Additionally colleges place certain restrictions on your applications to other early application processes.

Rolling Admission

A decision plan that lets students submit an application at any time throughout the year. Colleges will review applications as they receive them, and make admission decisions throughout the year.

FY

School Report

A form submitted by your high school counselor to provide basic information about your academic performance.

Standardized Tests

Any form of test that either requires all test takers to answer the same questions in the same way, and that is scored in a "standard" or consistent manner. This makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual students or groups of students. Many colleges require you to take and report the results from certain standardized tests.

FY

Teacher

A type of recommender that has taught you in a specific subject and can speak to your performance in their class.

Transcript

Documentation to prove which courses you've taken and the grades you received for those courses. Your counselor will be required to provide an official transcript on your behalf.



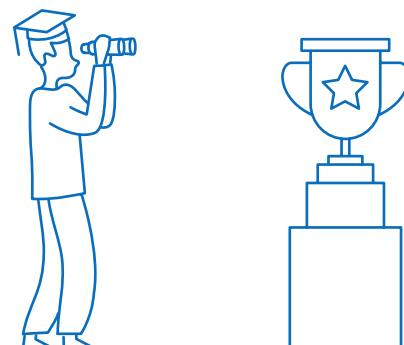
Transfer

A transfer student is anyone seeking to continue their college education. Common App for transfer supports a wide range of applicants including community college students, 4-year to 4-year transfers, new and returning adult learners, and veterans and active military members.

Writing Supplement

Not required by every college, these are additional writing prompts asked as part of the college specific questions. The Writing Supplement can only be submitted once your application to that college has been submitted.

Applying for Scholarships with Scholar Snapp



Common App has made it easy for applicants to access scholarship opportunities directly through your admissions application. We've partnered with the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation to give you the option to connect your information with Scholar Snapp — saving all your hard work to reuse on the next application!

Scholar Snapp makes it easier for students to apply for scholarships by allowing you to apply to multiple scholarships without having to re-enter your information each time. Instead, you can reuse your information from one application to another. Fill out one application and simply import it, or “snapp” it, to a Scholar Snapp profile to use again next time.

Scholar Snapp is a free service that any student applying to college can use.

\$35M available in scholarships

5.6K scholarship awards

511K students using Scholar Snapp

Scholar Snapp works with many scholarship providers, including the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation, Dell Scholars and Phi Theta Kappa. Check out their website for the full list of providers along with Frequently Asked Questions at scholarsnapp.org.

Use your Common App information to easily apply for scholarships

Once you submit an application in Common App, you'll be able to create a Scholar Snapp profile. You'll be guided to connect your accounts so we can transfer your Common App application information to your new Scholar Snapp profile.

1. Connect to Scholar Snapp in the Financial Aid Resources tab of your Common App.
2. Log in to your Scholar Snapp account, or register for a new account.
3. Give permission for Common App to access and transfer your data to Scholar Snapp.

That's it! You'll be notified when the transfer is complete and will be taken back to your Common App account.

Learn more about connecting your Common App with Scholar Snapp at appsupport.commonapp.org

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.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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 and organization name

150 characters – Activity details, honors won, and accomplishments

Example activity description

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.

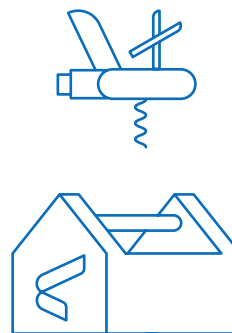
141 characters

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

Common App for International Applicants



If you are an international student applying to a university in the U.S., you are not alone! In fact, 1 in 10 applicants using Common App are just like you.

Did you know?



Students from over 200 countries use the Common App to apply to college each year.

This resource will review some common questions international applicants have when preparing to apply to a U.S. college or university.

Common questions

How do application fees work with Common App?

Each college decides the fee that they will charge to process your application. Not all colleges require applicants to pay a fee. In fact, you can search specifically for colleges that don't charge a fee.

379

colleges have no application fee for international students.

You can find information about application fees in the College Search tab, college's College Information section, and the Requirements Grid.

Tip: On commonapp.org, you'll find helpful resources like an [Application Guide](#) and [Application Dictionary](#). The [Application Requirements grid](#) also lists deadlines, fees, and other requirements for Common App member colleges.

What are application fee waivers?

International students may be eligible for a need-based Common App fee waiver. You can find the Common App fee waiver in the Profile section. Some colleges may also offer their own application fee waiver. It's important to check each university's fee waiver policy for international applicants.



To learn more, check out our resource on application fees and fee waivers at commonapp.org/ready.

What is the deadline to apply to a college or university?

Each college can choose their own admission plans and deadlines. Admission plans include: Early Action, Early Decision, Regular Decision, and Rolling Admission. For information about the differences in these plans, check out the [Application Dictionary](#).

The Requirements grid lists each college's deadlines. You can see your college's specific deadlines on the Dashboard.

Keep in mind that to meet an application deadline, you must submit your application materials by 11:59 pm in your local time zone, not the college's time zone or any other time zone.

How do I send my transcripts to Common App colleges?

Your counselor will submit transcripts and other school forms on your behalf. If you don't have a counselor, you can invite any school official who has access to your academic records. We recommend you invite a school official who can speak to your academic performance.

You will invite your counselor on the My Colleges tab in the Recommenders and FERPA section. Check out [this video](#) to learn more about the process.

If you have taken any university-level courses, you will note that in the Education section of your Common App. You will need to request the university to send your transcripts directly to the colleges you are applying to.

Are there any additional forms I need to submit?

Some colleges will ask for letters of recommendation to be submitted on your behalf. You can learn about each college's recommendation requirements on the College Information page.

You'll need to invite and assign your recommenders to the colleges where you want their letter to go. Recommender forms can be completed in Common App's Recommender System, or through one of Common App's partners (such as BridgeU, Cialfo, and MaiaLearning, and Naviance).

What should I do if I need help with my application?

Common App support is available 24/7. Visit the [Applicant Solutions Center](#) to view frequently asked questions, or contact a support team member. You can also email us at appsupport@commonapp.net.

What should I do if I have a question specific to a college I am applying to?

While Common App can assist with application-related questions, sometimes you may need to reach out



to a college directly. You can find contact information and links to the college's admissions website on their College Information page.

Some questions that vary by college include:

“Do I need to take any English proficiency tests?”

“Is it okay if my transcript is not in English?”

“Does this college offer financial aid for international applicants?”

Is there support for my recommenders?

Whether it's a counselor, teacher, or other recommender providing a letter of recommendation on your behalf, we are ready to assist when questions arise. Recommenders can visit the [Recommender Solutions Center](#) to find answers to frequently asked questions, access live chat, or to schedule a call with our support team. They can also email us at sfsupport@commonapp.net.

Connecting with Strive for College Mentors



Which colleges would be a good fit for me? What will make my admissions essays stand out? How do I go about completing the FAFSA form? Where can I find scholarships to help me pay for school? Applying to college can be stressful and it's natural for students to have all sorts of questions. Fortunately, Strive for College is here to help!

Strive for College is a non-profit organization that connects aspiring college students with free, one-on-one, online mentoring via the virtual platform, UStrive. Strive mentors can help you through the entire college admissions, financial aid and scholarship application processes. Because all the work takes place online via UStrive, you can connect whenever is most convenient for you and your mentor!

All Strive mentors are volunteers that are recruited from hundreds of colleges in the United States and work in some of the biggest companies in the world.

Connecting with Strive in the Common App

When completing the Common App, you can request to receive more information from Strive for College, if you are eligible to receive a fee waiver. To do so, go to the Profile section and open the Common App Fee Waiver.

1. Choose "Yes" when asked if you are eligible for a fee waiver.
2. Pick the indicator(s) that apply to you and provide your signature.
3. Select "Yes" to receive more information about connecting with Strive for College.
4. Create an account at <https://www.ustrive.com/students/commonapp>.

After creating your UStrive account, you'll be able to select the Strive mentor of your choosing. You can then choose whether you prefer to message, call or video chat to work through your questions. (You are able to do all of those directly through the UStrive platform.)

Your Strive mentor will help guide you through Strive's rich, proven college guidance curriculum and you can interact and get answers to all your college admissions, financial aid and scholarship questions from a real person who's been through the process before.

Brag Sheet:

Student Questionnaire for Counselor Letter of Recommendation



Brag sheets are a way for you to help your counselor and teachers write letters of recommendation. These forms give them more insight into who you are outside of school and your interests. Fill out these forms, and share them with your counselor and teachers when you ask them for a letter of recommendation!

This form is for **students** to fill out.

Complete this form to help your counselor write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. Keep in mind, the more specific the details you can give, the more personal and effective your recommendation will be.

.....

Student's full name: _____

Student's email address: _____

Student's cell number: _____

List three adjectives you would use to describe yourself.

What do you like to do for fun?



List your major activities in school.

Include what grade(s) you have participated (9,10,11,12, other) and any leadership positions, honors, and/or awards received.

List your major activities outside of school.

Consider things like clubs, sports, work, community service, hobbies, and family responsibilities. Include what grade(s) you have participated (9,10,11,12, other) and any leadership positions, honors, and/or awards received.

What events, experiences and/or people in your life have had the greatest influence on making you the person you are today?



Describe your academic strengths.

Do you believe your academic record is an accurate reflection of your ability? If not, please explain why.

What majors or careers are you considering?

Do you have any particular college preferences your counselor should know about?

School Size:

☐ Small (<2,000 students)

☐ Large (>15,000 students)

☐ Medium (2,000–15,000 students)

☐ Doesn't matter

Campus Setting:

☐ Urban

☐ Suburban

☐ Rural

☐ Doesn't matter

Type of School:

☐ Public

☐ Private

☐ HBCU

☐ HSI

Geographic:

Cities: _____

States: _____

Regions: _____

Countries: _____

Proximity to home: _____

Other (please describe): _____

What colleges have you visited (in person or virtually) and what were your impressions?

What colleges are you considering applying to?



What excites you about going to college?

What is something your counselor probably doesn't know about you?

Additional information.

Use this space to share any additional information with your counselor. Is there anything not already stated that you want to make sure they know prior to writing your letter of recommendation? What hopes do you have for your college experience?

Thank you for taking the time to share this important information with your counselor!

* Thank you to the members of Common App's Outreach Advisory Committee and counselors around the world for contributing to this resource.

FERPA & Your Application



When it comes time to invite your counselor and recommenders, Common App will prompt you to complete the FERPA Release Authorization. FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) is a law that protects the privacy of your education records.

Completing the FERPA Release Authorization will grant your high school permission to send those records on your behalf. Here's a quick breakdown of how this process works in the Common App:

What is an education record?



Education records are documents related to your attendance and performance in school. For example: grades, transcripts, test scores, school discipline, etc.

The release authorization asks you two questions about your education records under FERPA.

First, you must grant your high school(s) permission to release all requested records. Colleges you apply to may require documents like transcripts or letters of recommendation. Granting your high school(s) this permission allows colleges to receive these records and contact your school with questions.

Second, you will be asked to waive or not to waive your right to review recommendations and other forms.

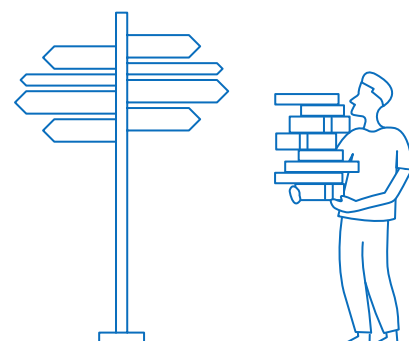
Waiving your rights lets colleges know that you don't plan to read your recommendations. This helps reassure colleges that the letters are candid and truthful. Some recommenders may only write a letter if you have waived your rights. Check with your counselor or teachers to see if any of them follow such a policy.

Learn more

Talk to your counselor, another school official, or your parent/legal guardian. You can also visit the U.S. Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office at: studentprivacy.ed.gov.

Gather Your Materials

Use this checklist to help you gather the information you'll need as you fill out your Common App.



☐ High school information

You'll need to know things like your high school's CEEB code, GPA scale, and class rank reporting. Check in with your counselor for more details about this information. Ask them for the High School Details Information Sheet! (Download it at commonapp.org/ready)

☐ An unofficial copy of your high school transcript

You'll be asked to list the courses you're taking this academic year.

Some colleges ask applicants to self report their full academic record in the Courses & Grades section. If you have a college on your list that requires Courses & Grades, you'll need your transcript to complete this section.

☐ A copy of your test scores and dates

You have the option to enter scores for standardized exams like the ACT and SAT that you have taken and/or plan to take. Don't forget, you'll still need to send official score reports to colleges that require them.

☐ Citizenship information

Social Security Number, if you intend to apply for financial aid via FAFSA (For U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, U.S. dual citizens, U.S. permanent residents, U.S. refugees, and U.S. asylees).

For Permanent Residents: A copy of your green card.

For non-U.S. citizens: U.S. visa type, number, and date issued. If you do not yet have a U.S. visa but intend to apply for one, you can indicate that in the application.

☐ State of residence information

If you think you qualify for in-state tuition for a school you might be asked to share more information about your residence in that state.



☐ Parent information

You'll be asked to share some basic information about one or more parents, including your parent's occupation and job title, and the education level they received. If your parent attended college, you'll need to know the name and location of the college they attended, as well as what degree they received and when.

☐ A list of academic honors

You can include up to 5 academic honors you received during high school. You'll need to include the honor's title, when you received it, and the level of recognition you received (regional or national, for example).

☐ A list of your activities

You have the option to enter up to 10 activities you participated in during high school. These activities might include family responsibilities, jobs, volunteer work, clubs, sports, hobbies, and more.

For each activity you'll list: the years of participation, hours per week and weeks per year spent on the activity, position/leadership held, and a brief description.

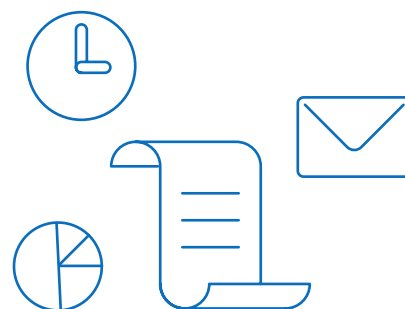
Parent information

- ☐ Occupation
- ☐ Job title
- ☐ Education level
- ☐ Name of college(s) attended
- ☐ College location
- ☐ Degree earned
- ☐ Year degree earned

Use this space to jot down a few activities you want to report in your application.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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?

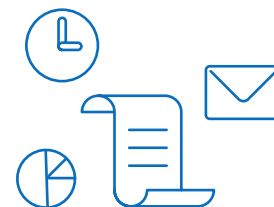
In this case, students should report the weighted value.

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.

My High School Details

Use the information below to help you complete the Education section in the Common App.



High School Information

High School Name: _____

High School Address: _____

CEEB Code: _____

Graduation Date: _____

Counselor Information

Counselor Name: _____

Counselor Job Title: _____

Counselor Email: _____

Counselor Phone: _____

Grades and Current Courses

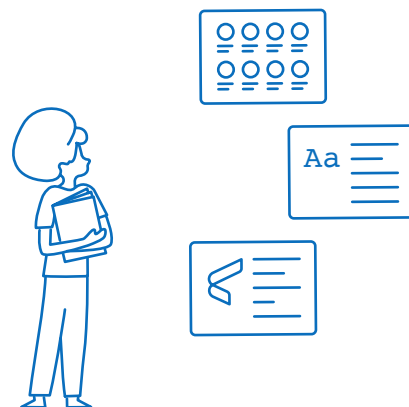
Graduating Class Size (approx.): _____ GPA Scale (select one): _____

Class Rank Reporting (select one): _____ GPA Weighting (select one): _____

Class Rank Weighting (select one): _____ Course Scheduling System (select one): _____

How the First Year Common App Works

A quickstart guide for students using the first year Common App.



1 Add colleges

Get started by adding colleges to your list. You can find colleges to apply to in the College Search tab of your Common App account. The College Search tab also has information and links to help you research each college. Almost 900 colleges use Common App! Go to commonapp.org/explore to start exploring.

2 Stay organized

Each college has its own set of specific requirements and supplements. When it comes to tracking this information and staying organized, we're here to help! Use the "Requirements Grid" and each college's "College Information" page to find this information. You can also use Common App On Track, our mobile companion app, to track deadlines, set reminders, and more.

To start your college application checklist, check out our "My College Requirements" worksheet at commonapp.org/ready.

3 Complete and submit

Answering all the questions in the Common App tab is a great way to start your applications. For each college you will:

- Answer college specific questions
- Invite and manage recommenders
- Complete other supplements (if applicable)

After all these sections are complete, you are ready to submit your application! Submission is simple: review, pay (if applicable), and submit.

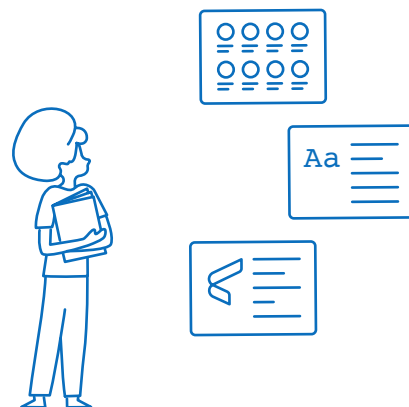
How does my application get there?

When you submit we combine your responses from the Common App and college specific questions, as well as any supplements, into one form. Your counselor, teachers, and other recommenders complete their reports and evaluations separately.

As recommenders submit their forms, they will be sent to the college to be added to your application.

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To start your college application checklist, check out our "My College Requirements" worksheet at commonapp.org/ready.

3 Complete and submit

Answering all the questions in the Common App tab is a great way to start your applications. For each college you will:

- Answer college specific questions
- Invite and manage recommenders
- Complete other supplements (if applicable)

After all these sections are complete, you are ready to submit your application! Submission is simple: review, pay (if applicable), and submit.

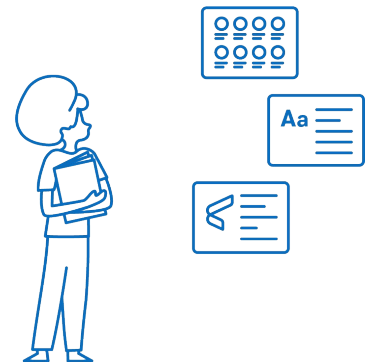
How does my application get there?

When you submit we combine your responses from the Common App and college specific questions, as well as any supplements, into one form. Your counselor, teachers, and other recommenders complete their reports and evaluations separately.


As recommenders submit their forms, they will be sent to the college to be added to your application.

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 and 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?



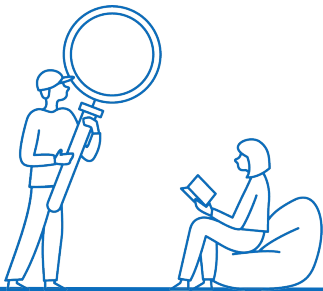
Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

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?



Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma — anything of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.


Think about

- When you first observed or were introduced to the problem
- The people or experiences that helped you understand the issue

Ask yourself

- Why is this important to me?
- What would a solution look like?



 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?



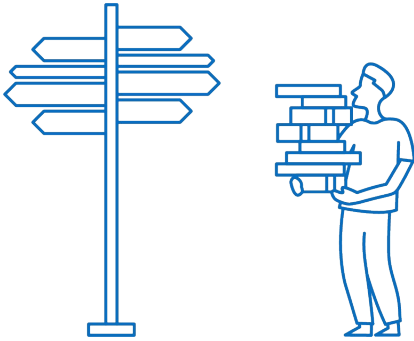
Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

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

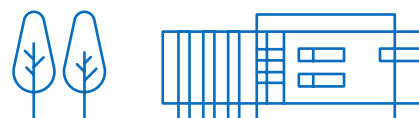
Ask yourself

- 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.

My College Requirements Worksheet



Staying organized and understanding what you need to fill out in the application is crucial. But, because each college has its own specific requirements, it can seem like a lot to keep track of.

Use this worksheet to collect the requirements of the colleges on your list. This way you have all the information in one place when you need it. We've included space for 4 colleges, but if you have more you want to add, just copy and paste the last page!

Here is where you can find colleges' requirements in the application:

College Search tab

Select a college from the list to open their requirements. You can also use the "more info" icon for links to other helpful resources.

My Colleges tab

Each college's "College Information" page contains all their specific requirements.

Requirements Grid

This PDF lists all colleges that use Common App and their requirements. You can access this document on your Dashboard, in College Search, or in the Solutions Center.

Writing Requirements by college

This FAQ lists out all the Common App colleges and their writing questions. You can find it in our Solutions Center at appsupport.commonapp.org

College Name:

Deadline: _____

Application Fee: _____

Personal Essay:

☐ Yes ☐ Optional

Courses & Grades:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Supplements:

☐ Portfolio
☐ Writing Supplement

Testing Policy:

☐ SAT/ACT Tests Used
☐ Always Required
☐ Sometimes Required
☐ Never Required
☐ Flexible
☐ Ignored

Writing Questions:

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Additional Information

Recommendations:

Teacher Evaluations:

____ Required ____ Optional

Other Evaluations:

____ Required ____ Optional

Types Accepted:

☐ Arts Teacher
☐ Clergy
☐ Coach
☐ College Access Counselor
☐ Employer
☐ Family Member
☐ Peer
☐ Other

College Name:

Deadline: _____

Application Fee: _____

Personal Essay:

☐ Yes ☐ Optional

Courses & Grades:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Supplements:

☐ Portfolio
☐ Writing Supplement

Testing Policy:

☐ SAT/ACT Tests Used
☐ Always Required
☐ Sometimes Required
☐ Never Required
☐ Flexible
☐ Ignored

Writing Questions:

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Additional Information

Recommendations:

Teacher Evaluations:

____ Required ____ Optional

Other Evaluations:

____ Required ____ Optional

Types Accepted:

☐ Arts Teacher
☐ Clergy
☐ Coach
☐ College Access Counselor
☐ Employer
☐ Family Member
☐ Peer
☐ Other

College Name:

Deadline: _____

Application Fee: _____

Personal Essay:

☐ Yes ☐ Optional

Courses & Grades:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Supplements:

☐ Portfolio
☐ Writing Supplement

Testing Policy:

☐ SAT/ACT Tests Used
☐ Always Required
☐ Sometimes Required
☐ Never Required
☐ Flexible
☐ Ignored

Writing Questions:

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Additional Information

Recommendations:

Teacher Evaluations:

____ Required ____ Optional

Other Evaluations:

____ Required ____ Optional

Types Accepted:

☐ Arts Teacher
☐ Clergy
☐ Coach
☐ College Access Counselor
☐ Employer
☐ Family Member
☐ Peer
☐ Other

College Name:

Deadline: _____

Application Fee: _____

Personal Essay:

☐ Yes ☐ Optional

Courses & Grades:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Supplements:

☐ Portfolio
☐ Writing Supplement

Testing Policy:

☐ SAT/ACT Tests Used
☐ Always Required
☐ Sometimes Required
☐ Never Required
☐ Flexible
☐ Ignored

Writing Questions:

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Additional Information

Recommendations:

Teacher Evaluations:

____ Required ____ Optional

Other Evaluations:

____ Required ____ Optional

Types Accepted:

☐ Arts Teacher
☐ Clergy
☐ Coach
☐ College Access Counselor
☐ Employer
☐ Family Member
☐ Peer
☐ Other

Brag Sheet:

Parent Questionnaire for Counselor Letter of Recommendation



Brag sheets are a way for you to help your counselor and teachers write letters of recommendation. These forms give them more insight into who you are outside of school and your interests. Fill out these forms, and share them with your counselor and teachers when you ask them for a letter of recommendation!

This form is for **parents** to fill out.

Complete this form to help your student's counselor write a letter of recommendation on their behalf. Keep in mind, the more specific the details you can give, the more personal and effective your child's recommendation will be. Anecdotes are very helpful.

.....

Student's full name: _____

Name of person(s) completing this form: _____

Relation to student: _____

Your email address: _____

List three adjectives you would use to describe your student.



What makes your student unique?

Consider sharing a characteristic or accomplishment that we might not know about or won't see on their academic or activity record.

List some activities your student enjoys.

How do you view your student's academic progress up to this point?

What do you believe to be your student's strengths (academic and personal)?

What do you believe to be your student's weaknesses (academic and personal)?



How does your student react to setbacks?

Can you provide an example of a time your student overcame an obstacle or adversity and demonstrated strength, courage, or resiliency?

List any events or experiences you feel have significantly influenced your student.

List any special circumstances that may affect where your student may apply/attend college.

Additional information.

Use this space to share any additional information about your student, including specific examples or stories that highlight your student's character. What hopes do you have for your student's college experience?

Thank you for taking the time to share this important information about your student!

* Thank you to the members of Common App's Outreach Advisory Committee and counselors around the world for contributing to this resource.

Brag Sheet:

Student Questionnaire for Teacher Letter of Recommendation



Brag sheets are a way for you to help your counselor and teachers write letters of recommendation. These forms give them more insight into who you are outside of school and your interests. Fill out these forms, and share them with your counselor and teachers when you ask them for a letter of recommendation!

This form is for **students** to fill out.

Complete this form to help your teacher write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. Keep in mind, the more specific the details you can give, the more personal and effective your recommendation will be. Don't forget to take the time to thank your teacher! At the top of the form you'll find a suggested thank you note to include.

.....

Dear [name of teacher],

Thank you so much for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation on my behalf. I hope you find the additional information about me helpful.

Sincerely,

Name of student (printed)

Name of student (signature)

Date



.....

Student's full name: _____

Student's email address: _____

List the name of the course(s) you took with this teacher, including the grade you were in (9,10,11,12, other) when you took the course(s).

List three adjectives you would use to describe yourself.

Describe why you have chosen this teacher to write a letter of recommendation for you.

Describe a lesson or unit in the class that you enjoyed and why.

Describe a project you worked on in the class that you are proud of.

What is something your teacher probably doesn't know about you?



Below is a list of attributes colleges consider when evaluating your application. Select 1 or 2 of these attributes and share an example of a time you demonstrated these characteristics in class.

Academic achievement, intellectual promise, quality of writing, creative and original thought, productive class discussion, respect accorded by faculty, disciplined work habits, maturity, motivation, leadership, integrity, reaction to setbacks, concern for others, self-confidence, initiative, and independence.

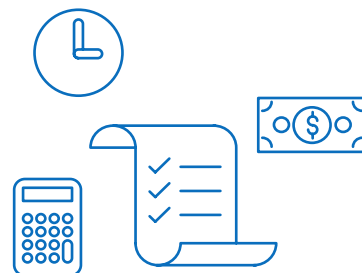
Additional information.

Use this space to share any additional information with your teacher. Is there anything not already stated that you want to make sure they know prior to writing your letter of recommendation?

Thank you for taking the time to share this important information with your teacher!

* Thank you to the members of Common App's Outreach Advisory Committee and counselors around the world for contributing to this resource.

Understanding Application Fees & Fee Waivers



Application Fees

An application fee is a fee that a college charges for applying to their institution. Each college can choose how much to charge, and whether or not they charge a fee at all. In fact, many colleges don't charge a fee.

There are several places within Common App that list colleges' application fee requirements:

College Search

When you choose a school from the results list you'll see a breakdown of all their requirements, including application fees.

Did you know?

In College Search you can choose to search for colleges that charge no application fee at all.

College Information

The first page of any college on your My Colleges tab shows their "College Information". Application fees for both domestic and international applicants are listed on this page.

Requirements Grid

The Requirements Grid lists out the requirements (including application fees) for all colleges that use Common App. You can find this downloadable PDF on the Dashboard, College Search, and in our Solutions Center.

371 colleges have no application fee for domestic students.

379 colleges have no application fee for international students.



Fee Waivers

A fee waiver lets you apply to a college without paying an application fee. Common App wants to make sure that application fees aren't a barrier for any student trying to submit an application. That's why we have the Common App Fee Waiver.

The Common App Fee Waiver waives the application fee of any college you apply to through Common App.

You can find the Common App Fee Waiver in the Profile section of the Common App tab. To apply for this fee waiver:

1. Answer "Yes" to the fee waiver statement.
2. Select all the indicators in the list that apply to you.
3. Enter your signature to certify your request.

Note

Your counselor will also be asked to confirm that you are eligible for this waiver. You will still be able to submit your application without a fee while your counselor confirms.

Keep in mind, the Common App Fee Waiver isn't the only fee waiver available to you. Many colleges also offer their own application fee waiver, specific to their school. Be sure to check with each college to understand their own fee waiver policies.

441,260

applicants received a fee waiver in 2017–2018.

\$65M

in need-based fee waivers were granted by our member colleges in 2017–2018.

**Need more information on
application fees and fee waivers?
Visit appsupport.commonapp.org**

Understanding the Recommendation Process



Many colleges ask you to include letters of recommendation with your application. These letters are submitted by recommenders. A recommender's input helps clarify and support the information you share in your application. They also help inform colleges about your academic potential and how you would fit in with their community.

Who are recommenders?

Recommenders are people who have worked with and supported you in your life. They can be individuals in your school – like counselors and teachers. They can also be people who worked with you in extracurricular activities, such as coaches or employers.

There are four recommender types in the Common App: counselors, teachers, other recommenders, and advisors.

Counselor

Counselors share information about you within the context of your entire class and school community. They submit several different forms, including your transcript. The counselor recommendation letter provides insights into your academic history. They can also share information about achievements, extracurricular accomplishments, and personal interests.

Teacher

Teachers provide information about you in the context of their classroom. They have firsthand knowledge of your intellectual curiosity, creative thought, and writing quality. They can also contextualize your class behavior and work habits.

Other Recommender

Other recommenders are individuals you have worked with outside of school. They can provide context around your hobbies, passions, and other responsibilities. The other recommender types available in the Common App are: Arts Teacher, Clergy, Coach, College Access Counselor, Employer, Family Member, Peer, or Other.

Each college can choose which types of other recommenders they accept.



Advisor

An advisor can be anyone who is assisting you with your application process. One thing that makes the advisor role different, is that they do not submit any forms on your behalf. Advisors can track your application progress and see PDF preview of your application, if you choose to share it.

Recommendation requirements

Every college can choose how many letters of recommendation to require. They can also determine which recommender types they accept. To see a college's requirements, go to their "College Information" screen in the My Colleges tab.

Asking for a letter of recommendation

Before inviting a recommender in your application, it's important to ask if they are willing to provide a recommendation first. It's best to ask in person, but an email is ok too. When asking, be respectful of your recommenders' time. You should ask for a letter of recommendation at least three weeks in advance of a deadline. The more advance notice you give, the more time they have to craft a well-written letter.

When you are ready to send your invitations, go to the My Colleges tab. You can invite recommenders in any college's Recommenders and FERPA section. For more details about this process, check out the application guide on commonapp.org.

Supporting your recommenders

Counselors and teachers are asked to write letters of recommendation by many students. To help make the process easier for them, we created a set of questionnaires for you to fill out. The information you share will help them write a more personal and effective recommendation.

It's also a good idea to stay in contact with your recommenders. Help keep them updated on your application deadlines and other important information. You can also track the status of your recommendations within your application.

Don't forget to thank your recommenders for writing those letters! A thank you note goes a long way.

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.

493 member colleges utilize this policy.

Sometimes Required:

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

218 member colleges utilize this policy.

Never Required:

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

90 member colleges utilize this policy.

Standardized tests you can report in Common App

College admission tests:

- ACT
- SAT

Subject tests:

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

English proficiency tests:

- TOEFL
- PTE Academic
- IELTS

**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.

78 member colleges utilize this policy.

Ignored:

Standardized test scores are ignored if they are received.

3 member colleges utilize this policy.

Did you know?

You can search for colleges based on their testing requirements.

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.

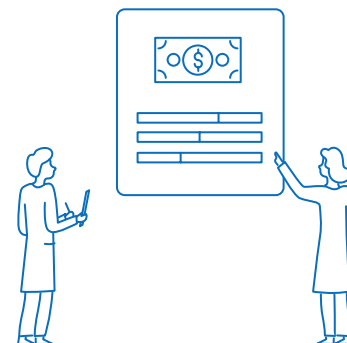
As you begin filling out your Common App, remember that you have some flexibility in the Testing section. You can choose how to complete this section and which colleges receive your test scores. This is especially useful if you are applying to colleges with different testing policies.

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, check out our tutorial videos on YouTube: youtube.com/commonappmedia.

Understanding your financial aid offer



Congratulations, you've been accepted to college! First, celebrate this success. Next, figure out the cost of attending college.

Start by reviewing the financial aid offer letter from each college you've been accepted to. This letter can come with your acceptance notification via email, separately in the mail, or can be found on your student portal on the college's website (if you're not sure, call the college's financial aid office). Each school will offer a different amount of money, so it's important to review this information with your family or a trusted adult.

Every financial aid offer letter is different, but the key terms are similar across colleges. Use this guide to help make an informed financial decision about where to go to college.

Don't forget:

It's okay to have questions!
You can, and should, contact a college's financial aid office.

There are lots of reasons to pick a college, the best choice for you may not be the college with the lowest price tag.

Helpful terms

Cost of Attendance (or COA)

The estimated total cost of attending a college for one academic year, including direct and indirect costs.

Direct costs

Tuition, student fees, room & meal plan, usually paid directly to the school.

Indirect costs

Other costs of going to college such as books, travel, and personal expenses.

Note: the COA may change from year to year (e.g., if tuition increases annually or if you choose an alternative housing & meal plan). **If the COA is not listed on your financial aid letter, contact the college's financial aid office and request the direct and indirect costs of attending.**



Grants/Scholarships

Free money from the federal government, state, college, or outside/private organization that you **do not** have to pay back.

Note: Ask the college's financial aid office if grants and scholarships awarded to you are renewable each year, or if the amount can be adjusted based on other factors (e.g., maintaining a certain GPA, if outside scholarships will decrease your aid, etc.).

Loans

Money that must be repaid to the government or an institution (if you finish school or not). You can choose to accept the entire loan amount, a reduced amount, or none at all.

Federal Direct Loans

Subsidized Loans

- Up to \$3,500 for first-year students (can increase sophomore, junior, & senior year).
- Amount determined when you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#)).
- Interest **does not** accumulate while you are in school.
- You **do not** have to pay while you're in school. You receive a 6-month grace period after graduating from college or leaving school before starting to repay loans.

Unsubsidized Loans

- Up to \$5,500 for first-year students (can increase sophomore, junior, & senior year).
- Amount determined when you complete the [FAFSA](#).
- Interest **does** accumulate while you are in school.
- You **do not** have to begin paying on this loan until 6 months after you graduate college or leave school.

Note: Federal loans seem intimidating, but they are a great option to pay for college. Federal loans have lower interest rates and multiple repayment plans based on your income after college than other types of loans.

Other types of loans

(Parent) PLUS Loan

- A federal loan taken out by your parent/guardian that **cannot** be transferred to you.
- Requires that a parent/guardian undergo a credit check.
- Loan can cover up to the COA.
- Interest rate is typically higher.



Private Loans

- Loans offered by a bank, credit union, state agency, or a college.
- Typically have higher interest rates.
- May require you make payments while in school.

Work-study

Money earned throughout the academic year by working a qualifying part-time job. This money is capped at the amount listed in your offer letter and will come in a paycheck reflecting the hours you have worked. This money is not directly applied to your student account, it can be used for books, travel, & other personal expenses.

Note: On-campus jobs can be competitive. If you're eligible for a work-study job it is **your** responsibility to find a job. While working during college can help with expenses, full-time students should consider working part-time to avoid having a negative impact on academics.

In order to compare the costs at different colleges and estimate the amount you'll have to pay, check out this comparison calculator from [The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#).

Still have questions? Visit [Federal Student Aid](#) to learn more.

Next steps

After reviewing your options and selecting the college you plan to attend, you need to accept your financial aid package by the deadline stated in your letter and complete any other steps.

If your financial circumstances have changed, or you are unable to pay the remaining balance expected for a college, you can appeal for more financial aid. Every college has a different process, so contact the college immediately if you need to begin that process.