

Tips for the Common Application 2025 Admission

The Common Application provides one application that can be submitted to many private colleges and universities and some public institutions. Identical copies of the main portion will be sent to all colleges and it will not be customized in any way. In addition to the main portion of the Common Application, most colleges and universities will have “supplements” or writing requirements that are specific to their school.

Getting Started:

- Go to: www.commonapp.org. Click on “Apply Now” and then “Create an Account.” Fill in all required information.
- Use a professional email address. Make sure that your email address is accurate so you can receive important information about deadlines and application submission from your colleges.
- Save your email address and password so you have them for future logins. Write down your Common App ID (CAID) that will be located at the top right under your name. Keeping track of all login information will be important!

Dashboard Tab:

- The “Dashboard” will be your main page each time you login to the Common App. When you login for the first time, you will not see any colleges listed, so the next step is to begin to add your colleges and universities.
- As you work through this application, **help screens are available on the right side of each page**. Use the My College Requirements to see available deadlines and whether you will need to enter courses and grades (C&G) for certain schools.
- As you add colleges, the “Dashboard” will display all of your colleges and their writing requirements. You can also delete colleges from the Dashboard page.
- The AXS Companion offers free tutorials for each section: <https://open.oregonstate.education/axscompanion/>

College Search Tab:

- Click on “College Search.” Type in the name of a college or the city where it is located and hit “Search.” Your college should come up in the list of results.
- Check the “plus” next to your college and click “Add.” You can then either “Search Again” to add more schools or go to “My Colleges,” which will show all of your schools and their application deadlines, requirements, websites, etc.

Common Application Tab:

- This is the main portion of the application and information provided here will be sent to every college on your Dashboard.
- On the left, you will see the sections of the Common Application including Profile, Family, Education, etc.
- Complete each section, paying special attention to all items marked with a red *. Those fields are required.
- When each section is completed, a green check will appear on the left-hand side. If you thought you finished a section, but the green check does not appear, go back to see if you have missed a question.

Profile and Family Section:

- Fill in all information relevant to you and your family members.
- When you get to the “Common App Fee Waiver,” please read all the guidelines carefully. If you feel you qualify for a fee waiver, indicate “Yes,” check the appropriate box that applies to your circumstances, and complete the fee waiver section by adding your name in the “Signature” box. Once your application is submitted, your high school will verify that you may qualify for the waiver.

Education Section:

- Under “Education,” type in El Camino Real Charter High School. You should get a list of schools; check ECRCHS.
- Complete all information required under ECRCHS.
- If you have attended another high school, add that information, including OFL or other summer school programs.
- If you have taken college courses, add that information under “Colleges and Universities.”
- To complete the information under “Grades,” please check with the College Office to get your GPA and senior class size. Our grading is done on a 4.0 scale and is “Weighted.”
- Add your current course schedule for fall and expected schedule for spring. A course that will be taken both semesters, such as math, can be listed as a “full year” course. A semester long course, such as US government, will be listed as either first or second semester.
- Under the “Honors” section, list the number of academic honors you may have received, up to a total of five. This would include California Scholarship Federation, National Merit, AP Scholar, school recognition, etc.
- Complete the “Future Plans” section regarding career plans and highest degree you intend to earn.

Testing:

- Many colleges will be test-optional for this application cycle and you will be asked in each college's "questions" if you would like them to consider test scores in the admissions process.
- Under this section, you will report the results of your standardized tests including SAT, ACT, and AP tests. This section is optional, but we recommend that it be completed.
- Click on the box where it says "Indicate All Tests You Wish to Report." You will then see separate boxes for each test. Keep adding categories by clicking this box.
- Enter the number of times you have taken each particular test and whether you plan to take future tests.
- For the ACT, enter the highest individual composite and subsection scores, even if they are from different test dates.
- For AP Tests, enter the number of tests taken or planned. Enter the dates and results of each test or leave the results blank for future exams.
- If you have any questions, refer to the help menu on the right side of the page.
- **Note: You are still responsible for having all official SAT and ACT test scores send from the appropriate reporting agency. Most schools will not require official AP and IB test reports, but remember to self-report them in this section, including AP tests to be taken in May 2025.**

Activities:

- There are 10 spaces to list your extracurricular activities including sports, community service, music, etc. in the order that they are important to you. It might be helpful to make a list of your activities and involvements before beginning this section, just to make sure you don't forget something important.
- Select the "Activity Type" from the drop-down menu.
- Enter the position and/or leadership roles. This entry has a maximum of 50 characters, including spaces.
- Enter the organization or activity name, using a maximum of 50 characters, including spaces.
- Enter the years you participated, number of hours each week, and weeks per year.
- Describe your involvement. This entry is limited to 150 characters, including spaces. Try to use bullet points rather than complete sentences to provide as much information as possible.
 - **Sentence: I played on the varsity tennis team for four years and was number one doubles for two years. I was also the team captain my junior and senior years.**
 - **Bullet: Varsity tennis 4 years, number 1 doubles 2 years, team captain junior and senior year, Most Valuable Player 2 years, organized team fundraisers.**
- In "Activities" and throughout the application, be cautious of using initials to describe clubs or activities. Don't assume that the reader knows all possible club names. For example, Calif. Scholarship Federation instead of CSF, or National Honor Society instead of NHS.
- Enter the years you participated, number of hours each week, and weeks per year. Estimate as closely as possible.
- After completing your activities, you can use the "up" and "down" arrows to display your activities in order of their importance to you.

Writing:

- The "Writing" section includes one essay, between 250 and 650 words. There are seven possible topics. Select the one that you are answering.
- Write and edit your essay in a Word or Google document. When you are ready, cut and paste the essay into the box. You will notice the word counter at the bottom. Be sure to keep your essay under 650 words or you will not be able to complete the application.
- Bold, italics, and underlined type will be visible. Indentation and paragraph formatting may be automatically removed.
- If this essay is optional for any of your colleges, you will be given the option to include the essay during the submission process. We usually recommend sending "optional" essays.

Additional Information:

- The "Additional Information" section allows you to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected elsewhere on your application and there are two spaces available to you. **THIS SECTION IS OPTIONAL.**
 - If you have been seriously impacted by COVID-19, you can share those details in an essay up to 250 words. Please seriously consider how you have been impacted, beyond what everyone is experiencing; you'll want to use this section only if there are unusual or significant circumstances.
 - If there are other extenuating circumstances not yet included in your application, you can use the optional additional information up to a maximum of 650 words. You will cut and paste your document into this space.

Courses and Grades:

- This section, you will see which schools, if any, want you to add high school courses and grades.
- Using your transcript, add courses to each year. Use course names, grades, and credits exactly as they appear on your transcript and be sure to double-check your entries.
- Since your 12th grade courses have already been reported in another section of the application, you will not need to enter them here again unless you already have a grade for a course, such as classes taken this past summer.

Supplements and My College Tab:

- Return to the “Dashboard” to begin your supplements for each college that you have entered.
- Click on a college and “Show More Details” to check the “Status” of the various parts of your application. You will see if the Common Application portion is “Complete” and if you need to answer the “Questions” and “Recommender” sections. Click on the “Writing Requirements” tab to see if the main essay is optional and whether you have additional writing requirements. Some schools may not have a “Writing Supplement,” but most will ask additional questions and want the names of teachers and counselors who will be writing letters of recommendation. Some shorter essays may appear under “Questions.”
- Click on “My Colleges” to begin your supplements for each college. Under “Questions,” you will be asked for information such as college start date, application plan (Early Action, Regular Decision, etc.) and majors or areas of interest. Complete all requested information. These questions are school-specific and have been selected by the admissions officers to appear on the “Questions” page.
- Many schools will have the separate Writing Supplement that will include additional essay topics.

Recommenders, FERPA, and linking Naviance:

- *Under any of your colleges, click the Recommenders and FERPA tab. Read the instructions.*
- *Read through the FERPA Release Authorization, check the appropriate boxes to waive your ability to see letters of recommendations, and sign your name in this section. You will need to waive your right to view all letters of recommendation written and sent on your behalf. This section cannot be changed once completed!*
- *Once FERPA is completed with a green check, login to your ECRCHS Naviance account. On your home page or under Colleges I'm Applying To, follow the instructions to link Naviance and your Common Application account using your birthdate and email address.*
- *Once you are ready to request teacher recommendations, you will do so through Naviance. As teachers submit the letters, your Common Application will show the dates of submission.*
- If allowed by a college, you may include recommenders other than teachers. These could include clergy, coaches, employers, etc. An “Other Recommender” section will appear in the Recommendation section of the Common App if allowed by the college. Click on “Add Another” and add the name and email of the individual who will be writing.
- You can also add an “advisor” who might be helping with the application process, such as independent counselors or community-based organizations, so they can review your application.

Payments and Submission:

- Complete the Common App, Member Questions, and Assign Recommenders and you can begin the submission process.
- Click on “Review and Submit Common App” on the particular college page under “My Colleges.”
- Click “Start Submission.” This will generate a “Print Preview” PDF document. Review this document carefully for errors before proceeding further. Print a copy for your records.
- You will then confirm that the PDF version is accurate. The next step is “Payment.” If eligible for a fee waiver, you will receive notification on the payment page. Otherwise, proceed with paying the application fee with a credit card.
- Once you pay and sign, the Common Application and Member Questions will be sent to the college.
- If your college has a “Writing Supplement,” you will go back and complete the essays that are on the supplement. You will then submit the Writing Supplement separately, but before the application due date.

Deadlines:

- Each college has a specific deadline for accepting your Common Application, Member Questions, and Writing Supplements. These deadlines can be viewed under each college listed in the “My Colleges” section.
- Submit your applications well in advance of deadlines. Do not wait until the last minute to submit your application! You know what can happen: Systems go down, systems become overloaded, etc.! Once a deadline has passed, you will not be able to submit your forms to the institution.

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND IMPORTANT TIPS:

- Read all the instructions on the Common Application website before getting started. ***While we are providing tips, only the actual Common Application website includes the full set of instructions.***
- “Help” tabs are available on each page and you can “Preview” each page of the Common App using the “Preview” tab at the top. You want to make sure this application is perfect: Excellent grammar, complete and accurate information, no spelling errors or typos.
- **The AXS Companion** is a free another free resource to help guide you through the Common App: <https://open.oregonstate.education/axscompanion/>
- Treat this application as a formal document, not a casual online form. Think about each question before responding, use appropriate language and correct grammar and punctuation, complete each answer thoroughly, and proofread before submitting.
- Make sure you have a copy of your transcript and official SAT and/ACT test scores before you begin. You do not want to “guess” at this information. ***You will need to have your College Counselor send your official transcript and you are responsible for sending your test scores directly from the testing organization, if required by the specific college.***
- Some colleges will allow students to upload documents, including a resume. **All uploaded documents should be in PDF format.**
- Save each section! You do not have to complete this application in one sitting; it is designed to be saved! If you are tired, take a break. You want all information to be accurate and thorough.
- The Common Application may be edited after submission to one college but before submission to others. You can use this feature to correct errors, but do not personalize the main Common Application for any particular school.
- While there are unlimited edits to the Common Application, your essay can only be edited a maximum of three times. Do not personalize your essay for a particular college. The college-specific essays will appear on the Writing Supplement or under Member Questions.
- Just so you have it handy, here is the contact information for the College Counselors who will be writing your recommendation.

Justin Graham (A-Gn)
College Counselor
j.graham@ecrchs.net

Sylvia Yir (Go-O)
College Counselor
s.yi@ecrchs.net

Liliana Murcia (P-Z)
College Counselor
l.murcia@ecrchs.net

- Once you begin submitting applications, be sure to check your email regularly for information from your colleges. Many schools will provide information to login to a student portal. Check “Junk Mail” folders to make sure you don’t miss anything important!
- If you change your senior year courses after you submit your application, you should notify your colleges. Many will want a mid-year report (grades from first semester of senior year) before making a decision, so senior grades will matter. ***And remember that all college acceptances are provisional; they can be rescinded by a college for a variety of reasons, including a significant drop in grades or receiving a grade lower than “C” during senior year, etc.*** Stay focused during 12th grade, all the way to the end.
- ***MOST IMPORTANT: THIS APPLICATION IS A REFLECTION OF WHO YOU ARE AND ALL ANSWERS MUST BE CURRENT, COMPLETE, AND TRUTHFUL. SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATIONS WELL AHEAD OF ANY DEADLINES!***