



# Tips for a Successful College Application Process

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# Agenda

- ▶ Getting Started
- ▶ Putting Together Your List
- ▶ Starting Your Applications
- ▶ How Do I Apply?
- ▶ Parts of the Application
- ▶ Tips
- ▶ Apply for Financial Aid

# Getting Started

- ▶ Self-reflection
  - ▶ Identify your goals
  - ▶ Strengths/weaknesses
  - ▶ Reasons for attending college
  - ▶ Be realistic
  - ▶ **Be organized**
  - ▶ This is personal! Remember the final decision is yours.



# Getting Started

- ▶ Identify Resources
  - ▶ Internet (Google, YouTube, social media, ChatGPT, webinars)
  - ▶ School counseling vs private
  - ▶ College Fairs: local or virtual
  - ▶ Visits to campus (tour, information sessions, open houses)
  - ▶ College visits to PRHS (in-person or virtual)
    - ▶ List in Naviance
  - ▶ Admission representatives
  - ▶ Books, magazines
  - ▶ [Naviance](#), College Board's [Big Future](#)

# Putting Together Your List

**What Do You Need? Be thoughtful, realistic. Your decision.**

- ▶ Distance from home
- ▶ Cost
- ▶ Major/undecided
- ▶ Culture: competitive, political, school spirited, religious, etc.
- ▶ Athletics: Recruited? Club? Intramural?
- ▶ Location: climate
- ▶ Size
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Clubs/activities/personality
- ▶ Support services

# Starting Your Applications

- ▶ Start Early
  - ▶ Most applications open August 1
  - ▶ Some colleges will waive application fee
  - ▶ Tip: Students can start the Common App before senior year
  - ▶ Tip: Follow colleges through social media or admission blogs
- ▶ Where's the application?
  - ▶ **College website** – admissions – apply online
  - ▶ Applications are not in Naviance, SIS, school counseling office
  - ▶ Tip: Many schools use more than one application type. Pitt/Penn State offer Common App, school specific. Students apply using one app.



# Penn State Admissions

**PennState**  
Undergraduate Admissions

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## Steps to Apply

Follow these steps to complete your Penn State application.

### Steps to Apply by Applicant Type

The first step to applying is to decide what type of applicant you are. Select the applicant type that best describes you from the list below.

**How to Apply**

- Admission Requirements
- Steps to Apply**
- Application Review Process
- Dates & Deadlines
- Admission Statistics
- Early Action (FAQ)
- MyPennState Information

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### First-Year Students

You are a first-year student if you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident who is currently in high school or has completed fewer than 18 college credits.

### International Students

You are an international student if you require any type of visa to attend Penn State. This includes students living inside and outside the United States.

- Early Action (FAQ)
- MyPennState Information
- Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR)
- MyPennState Application
- Common Application
- Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success

# Pitt Admissions

The screenshot displays the University of Pittsburgh's Admissions & Financial Aid website. The header features the university's logo and name, a search bar, and a navigation menu with options: REQUEST INFO, EXPLORE, VISIT, APPLY, FINANCIAL AID, and LIFE AT PITT. The main content area is titled "Application Requirements" and includes a paragraph explaining the review process and a list of four requirements. On the right side, there are buttons for "Freshman Application" and "Pay Your Application Fee", along with a section for "Contact your Pitt Territory Manager" and a "Chat with Admissions" button.

**University of Pittsburgh**

ADMISSIONS & FINANCIAL AID

REQUEST INFO | EXPLORE | VISIT | APPLY | FINANCIAL AID | LIFE AT PITT

## Application Requirements

When your application is complete, it will go to our admissions committee for our holistic review process. Once review has started, you should hear back from us within 4-6 weeks! We'll consider your application complete once we have everything on this list.

- Completed online application for admission. This can be the University of Pittsburgh Application, the Common Application, or the Coalition Application – we accept all three and do not prefer one over the other. Please choose the one that is best for you!
- \$55 application fee.
- High school academic information. You can send us a transcript, but we encourage you to submit our Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR) instead. Completing the SRAR is easy – just fill it out to match your transcript exactly – and it speeds up your application processing time.
- Official SAT or ACT results. We're a test-friendly institution, which means that we will take your highest ACT composite score and your highest SAT superscore. We don't require the SAT Essay or ACT Writing scores.

REGIONAL CAMPUSES  
HOME SCHOOLED APPLICANTS

**Freshman Application**

**Pay Your Application Fee**

### Contact your Pitt Territory Manager

Our Enrollment Services team is here to help you. Contact us in your region to get answers to your admissions questions. Reach out to your territory manager.

**Chat with Admissions**



# How Do I Apply?

- ▶ **Common Application**

- ▶ Used by over 1088 colleges and universities
- ▶ Submitted applications go to the Common App
- ▶ Colleges download them from the website

- ▶ **School Specific Application**

- ▶ Tends to be less complicated than other applications.
- ▶ Submitted applications go straight to admission office

- ▶ **Tip: Colleges often host online application events**

- ▶ Look for online chat help

# Parts of an Application

- ▶ Who fills out the application?
  - ▶ Students are responsible.
  - ▶ Be honest. Colleges will verify information.
  - ▶ Parents can proofread/not do!
- ▶ Follow the directions
  - ▶ Schools vary in requirements
    - ▶ Transcript, score reports, grades and courses, self-reporting (SRAR – Pitt-Penn State)
- ▶ Follow the high school directions for sending documents
  - ▶ PRHS uses Naviance to send all student documents

# Parts of an Application

- ▶ Use correct grammar and spelling
- ▶ Watch out for different deadline dates
  - ▶ Create a binder, spreadsheet, google document
  - ▶ Rolling admission
    - ▶ Colleges evaluate applications as they are received or run out of space
  - ▶ Regular decision
    - ▶ Different deadline date for every college
  - ▶ Early action
    - ▶ Could be as early as October 15
  - ▶ Early decision
    - ▶ Most schools use November 1
    - ▶ Legally binding. Requires student, parent, school counselor signatures



# Parts of an Application

- ▶ Resume/activities
  - ▶ Try to give detail
- ▶ Essay/Personal Statement
  - ▶ Opportunity to shine, explain, or dream
  - ▶ Shouldn't sound like a parent or guardian
  - ▶ Don't try to impress
  - ▶ Be genuine
- ▶ Supplemental essay
  - ▶ Optional? No, not really...
  - ▶ Another chance to use your voice

# Parts of an Application

- ▶ Fee/Fee waiver
  - ▶ No application is complete without paying the application fee
  - ▶ Fee waiver available for students that qualify for College Board/ACT fee waiver
  - ▶ Extenuating circumstances?
    - ▶ Speak with your school counselor
  - ▶ Print out a receipt
  - ▶ Screen shot

# Application Tips

- ▶ Give your high school time to process document requests
  - ▶ PRHS requires **10 business days**
  - ▶ PRHS does not send scores: SAT, ACT, AP, CHS
  - ▶ Go to College Board or the ACT to have your scores sent
- ▶ Give your recommenders time to write a strong letter
  - ▶ Remind teachers, coaches, counselors with specific examples of strengths, strong character, goals
- ▶ Know the admission requirements
- ▶ Know the requirements for teacher letters of recommendation
  - ▶ Pitt/Penn State/VT = 0 letters
  - ▶ Many schools will accept 2, don't ask for 5
  - ▶ Thank your recommenders



# Application Tips

- ▶ Check your college portal regularly
  - ▶ Make sure colleges have received your application/documentation
- ▶ Check your email daily
  - ▶ Admissions may request an additional letter of recommendation
  - ▶ Require additional grade reports
  - ▶ May require an additional test score
  - ▶ Admissions may suggest an interview
  - ▶ Notify you about events/Open House/Major Specific
  - ▶ Notify you of their admission decision

# Apply for Financial Aid & Scholarships

- **Attend Financial Aid Night**
  - [PHEAA](#) hosts many webinars
- **FAFSA:** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is essential for financial aid in the U.S.
- **CSS Profile:** Some colleges require this for institutional aid.
- **Scholarships:** Look for college-specific scholarships and external ones based on your achievements and interests.



# Final Thoughts

- ▶ Start early
- ▶ Don't confuse selectivity with quality or fit
- ▶ Listen to your gut/intuition
- ▶ Be honest with yourself/parents
- ▶ Define what you need
- ▶ Use your voice in your applications
- ▶ Counselors advise not decide!
- ▶ Avoid senioritis!
- ▶ Enjoy this great adventure!

