



COMMON APP GUIDE – CLASS OF 2026

This is an overview of some frequently asked questions that have been asked by students filling out their Common Application. It is organized (roughly) by section.

To begin a Common Application, go to commonapp.org. You will be prompted to create an account. We strongly encourage you to use your pingry.org email address. Use a password that you will remember -- you will be on this site A LOT!

To start, you may want to click around a bit to familiarize yourself with the Common App. But the first main section you will be working on is the second tab, My Common Application, under Dashboard on the left hand main menu. Your goal is to fill out the sections so that on the left side, you see green check marks next to each subsection (e.g., Profile, Family, Education, etc.). Anything marked with an asterisk (*) needs to be answered.

August 1 is a key date to remember. That is the “rollover” date when the 2024-2025 application turns over to 2025-2026 (when you will apply). Common App and its participating colleges have until then to firm up their application questions, but your information will “roll over” to the next year. However, we **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that up until August 1, you do all your essay work in a Google or Word doc – not directly in the Common App.

What is a Common App fee waiver?

If you receive financial aid at Pingry (or receive a waiver for your SATs or ACTs), you may be eligible for a fee waiver to cover the cost of your college

applications. If you think this might be applicable to you, please reach out to your college counselor or Mrs. Reynolds to confirm.

The Personal Information and Family Sections

This is where you fill out your name (including a “different first name that people call you” if you wish), your contact information, and demographics. Once again, you are only required to answer those questions marked with an *. You will continue on to Family, Household, and Guardian questions.

What is Language Proficiency?

You will obviously mark English, but you can also indicate any other languages spoken at home. As well, if you are taking an AP or AT language, you certainly have a decent level of proficiency and can indicate speak/read/write/etc.

Additional Demographics: I thought post SCOTUS, race wasn't considered

College Admissions will not be able to see your responses to Demographic Background. This information is collected by Common Application for their purposes.

The Education Section

School information:

The Pingry School
131 Martinsville Road
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

Pingry's CEEB code is: 310315

What was my date of entry at Pingry?

K: 2013
1: 2014
2: 2015
3: 2016

4: 2017
5: 2018
6: 2019
7: 2020
8: 2021
9: 2022
10: 2023
11: 2024

What do I put for Graduation Date? June 2026

What is my counselor's email, title and extension? (908-647-5555 xxxx)
In alphabetical order by last name:

- Amy Cooperman, acooperman@pingry.org; Co-Director of College Counseling, x1239
- Reid Cottingham, rcottingham@pingry.org; Upper School Director and College Counselor, x1672
- Meghan Finegan, mfinegan@pingry.org; Senior Associate Director of College Counseling, x1342
- Scott Garrow, sgarrow@pingry.org; Assistant Director of College Counselor, x1391
- Joe Kinney, jkinney@pingry.org; College Counselor, x1377
- Susan Kinney, skinney@pingry.org; Co-Director of College Counseling, x1356
- Cherilyn Reynolds, creynolds@pingry.org; Associate Director of College Counselor, x1293
- Cynthia Santiago, csantiago@pingry.org; Assistant Director of College Counselor, x1344

What is Pingry's fax #?

908-647-6914

What is Other Secondary School?

If you joined Pingry later than freshman year or completed a semester abroad, you can enter that school's information here. If you have a high school transcript other than Pingry's, please confirm with your college counselor that we have a copy, as we will need to attach it to your Pingry transcript.

Colleges & Universities

This is where you can list any college courses you might have taken over the summer months. You do not have a "degree earned" but you can mark if you got college credit for the course.

What is the class size?

148

Pingry does not rank nor provide GPA – leave these blank

What should I put for senior year courses?

You can add what you requested or go back and complete this section in late summer or when school starts, as then you will have your senior year schedule. Remember to include BOTH your English courses and any other semester or trimester classes. Remember to note AP and Honors courses. Peer Leadership, Balladeers, Buttondowns, etc. would also be included (indicate all courses which are listed on your Pingry transcript). Advanced Topics can be noted as "Advanced." All non AP/AT/Honors courses can be noted as College Prep. Note, course names and course descriptions are communicated to colleges via the Pingry Profile which gets sent with your transcripts and recommendations.

All classes that are not Honors or AP or Advanced Topics should be "College Prep."

Find classes here: <https://www.pingry.org/learn/upper-school>

What should I put under Honors?

This can include honor roll, AP scholars designations, world language awards, book awards, arts awards, National Merit ... anything that is *academic* in nature.

What is PG?

PG stands for Post Graduate. You would not check this at this time. If you are a student taking a PG year next year (e.g., going to Lawrenceville to continue academics/athletics at a high school level before heading to college), you would indicate this here.

What are Community-Based Organizations?

If you are a NJ SEEDS or A Better Chance student, for example, you can identify that association in this section.

Future Plans?

Select the choice that identifies when you want to start your college education. For Highest Degree You Intend To Earn and Career Interest, select an option from the drop down menu that best describes your interests OR you can choose undecided which is perfectly OK.

Testing: Do I list every test?

It is optional (at most schools, but not all) to list your test scores. Some colleges will ask you to share results/submit every test, while some will let you superscore. In this section, however, you want to list only your highest scores per section or test sitting. This section just identifies what you wish to show via Common App – you may have to send your OFFICIAL test scores to colleges via College Board or ACT. It is very important for you to know your colleges' testing recommendations. There are a few colleges that ask you to upload screenshots of your tests, some that want you to send them officially from ACT or College Board, and others that don't need you to do anything until you confirm that you will be attending that school. You can visit college websites to read about their specific requirements. In this section, you will

also list any APs that you wish to report. Generally, we suggest listing APs that are 4s/5s. Remember to include future AP tests you will take in May of senior year, but just leave the scores blank. While Subject Tests have been eliminated, some have an SAT Subject Test to include if they have this as a drop-down in August. You may need to revisit this section, as you likely will in the months ahead to potentially update scores.

Testing Dates (note: fall dates are projected/anticipated): when did I take or when will I take ...

SAT (beginning 2022)

March 12, 2022

May 7, 2022

June 4, 2022

August 27, 2022

October 1, 2022

November 5, 2022

December 3, 2022

March 11, 2023

May 6, 2023

June 3, 2023

August 26, 2023

October 7, 2023

November 4, 2023

December 2, 2023

March 9, 2024

May 4, 2024

June 1, 2024

August 24, 2024

October 5, 2024

November 2, 2024

December 7, 2024

March 8, 2025
May 3, 2025
June 7, 2025
August 23, 2025
September 4, 2025
October 13, 2025
November 6, 2025
December 6, 2025

ACT (beginning 2022)

February 12, 2022
April 2, 2022
June 11, 2022
July 16, 2022
September 10, 2022
October 22, 2022
December 10, 2022
February 11, 2023
April 15, 2023
June 10, 2023
July 15, 2023
September 9, 2023
October 28, 2023
December 9, 2023
February 10, 2024
April 13, 2024
June 8, 2024
July 13, 2024
September 14, 2024
October 26, 2024
December 14, 2024
February 8, 2025
April 5, 2025

June 14, 2025

July 12, 2025

September 6, 2026

October 18, 2025

December 13, 2025

Activities Section

In the Activities, how much time should I say that I spend doing them?

Be sure to be honest here! If you only do something during the fall or winter or spring, then your weeks per year are probably 10-13. Hours per week for a sport? You probably have practice or games that add up to about 10-15 hours per week, but you can include pre-season, if applicable. Do your best in estimating.

How should I organize my Activities? Do I need to list 10?

How you list your activities is up to you, but we tend to say start with the most meaningful activities – those in which you have participated the longest, held a leadership position, etc. You do not need to list 10 if you are not significantly involved with 10. If you have more than 10, you may opt to submit a resume in the optional section or simply make note that you also do X, Y, and Z. Try to use action verbs (as if you are writing a resume).

Responsibilities and Circumstances

This section allows you to identify any responsibilities you have outside of school, i.e. caring for a sibling and any unique circumstances you have experienced.

Writing Section

Writing: the Personal Essay

For the 2025-2026 application cycle, the prompts for the Personal Essay are staying the same. As mentioned above, we recommend that you work in a

Google Doc and copy the essay into this space once you have finalized it. Common App essay prompts are as follows:

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. 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?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. 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?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that 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?
7. 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.

Additional Information

We recommend that you use this section to briefly describe any challenges or circumstances you have experienced that have not been otherwise addressed in your application. In this section, you can also share any nuances in your application that could use more of an explanation. This could be something related to your curriculum, another activity (if a meaningful one), or even a link to a personal website, publication, etc.

Courses and Grades

Common App will tell you if a college you are applying to requires you to complete this section. [CLICK HERE](#) for a list of schools that require this section to be completed. If you are required to enter your courses and grades, make sure you get a copy of your transcript from your college counselor. We recommend you print it out to ease the process. Indicate that you have access to your transcript and you will start entering your 9th grade courses and grades. Select Pingry School, the appropriate school year, A-F for grading scale, and Yearly for Schedule. Under Subject, select the subject that most represents your course. In the Course Name box, write the name exactly as it appears on your transcript. For Course Level, choose AP, Honors, or Advanced for courses that have that designation. All post AP classes, i.e. Math 6, are Advanced. For all other classes choose College Prep. Follow this procedure for each grade. Pingry does not include on your transcript courses taken in middle school or over the summer. You will need to repeat this process if you attended another high school. Some colleges will follow up with a request for entering your courses and grades through STARS (Self Reported Transcript and Academic Record System).

College Specific Questions, Supplements, Recommenders, and FERPA

When finished with Courses and Grades, you will be prompted to Go To My Colleges. Click on this to proceed to specific application requirements for each college you are applying to. Click on any college to get started. Follow the prompts through General, Family, Academics, etc. Depending on the school, there may be a section that requires a short answer. If the college you are applying to requires supplemental essays, they will be in the Writing section. Our recommendation is to write your supplemental essays in a google doc with the prompt by school. You will find that many schools use the same prompts.

Recommenders and FERPA

FERPA Agreement – must be signed in order for the CCO to send your materials to colleges; also, important: you must indicate that you WAIVE YOUR RIGHTS. DO NOT DO THIS BEFORE AUGUST 1. Please note that once you have signed FERPA for one school, it will apply for all schools.

Please [CLICK HERE](#) for instructions on filling out the Recommenders and FERPA section.

Adding Colleges

Click the search icon on the main menu to search for colleges you are interested in. Search for a school by name or city, use the + Add button to add the school to your list. Make sure you pay attention to location! There are colleges with similar names: Columbia University versus Columbia College, Trinity College versus Trinity University, etc.

Once you add a college, it will show up under the My Colleges section. You will notice college-specific questions and potential writing supplements appear. (Remember, these questions and writing prompts may not be final until August 1.)

College Information will provide pertinent information to you like deadlines, testing requirements, fees, etc.

Final Notes

If you have additional questions, reach out to your college counselor. You will find that Common App is pretty user-friendly. There is a sidebar to the right labeled Instructions and Help, where you can find a lot of answers to your questions, as well.

Please note, as mentioned earlier, you will not want to write your essay responses in the Common App until AFTER August 1. For now, use a Google doc, Word, etc.

Remember that responding to some answers triggers another set of required responses. For example, indicating a specific school (such as “Ross” under U Michigan, which is their business school) will elicit a Ross-specific essay prompt.

Frequently accessed websites:

Common Application: <http://www.commonapp.org/>

Scholarship finder: <http://www.fastweb.com/>

Calculating cost of attendance: <https://myintuition.org/>

Testing - Registration: [SAT](#) and [ACT](#)