

Sidwell Friends

Grade 9 Admissions Process: A Detailed Guide for Families

This guide walks through each step of the Grade 9 application checklist in more detail. None of these steps is designed to trip a family up — each one exists to give our admissions committee a fuller, fairer picture of your child. Where a step feels unfamiliar or the reasoning isn't obvious, that's exactly what this document is for.

Steps are grouped by the same three deadlines as the checklist: December 1, December 15, and December 31, 2026. Within each deadline, items are covered in the order they appear on the checklist.

FAMILY INFORMATION FORM

→ **Deadline: December 1, 2026**

What it is

A fairly short form completed by parents/guardians that opens your child's application file. It captures household and contact information, sibling and alumni connections (if any), the schools your child has attended, and any context you want the committee to have from the outset.

Why we ask for it this way

We open every file with the family's own words before any test score, transcript, or teacher comment enters the picture. Starting here — rather than with an assessment or a transcript — is intentional: it means the first thing in your child's folder is the context you contributed.

Tips for families

- This is the easiest step on the checklist and the one most families tend to delay or spend too much time — submitting it early takes it off your plate and makes the remaining steps accessible.
- If there's a learning difference, family circumstance, or scheduling constraint the committee should know about, this form is the place to say so.

REGISTER FOR YOUR CHILD'S SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

→ **Deadline: December 15, 2026**

What it is

Registration for the in-house assessment session your child will attend as part of the application. This is a scheduling step — you're reserving a date and time, not submitting scores.

Why we ask for it this way

We run our own assessment sessions (rather than relying solely on outside testing) so every applicant is evaluated under the same conditions, on our campus, administered the same way. Registering early gives your family first choice of dates and avoids the crunch of late-December scheduling.

Tips for families

- Register as soon as you're able if timing matters for your family. The admissions team will be less able to accommodate you the longer you wait.
- If your child has documented testing accommodations, let your admissions counselor know at registration so arrangements can be made in advance, not the week of.
- The assessment takes 90 minutes. Students are asked to complete three sections: math, reading, and writing.

CONFIDENTIAL TEACHER RECOMMENDATION FORMS (MATH & ENGLISH)

→ **Deadline: Request after November 1, 2026; due December 15, 2026**

What it is

A confidential form completed by your child's current math and English teachers, describing your child as a student — how they engage with material, work with peers, and handle challenges in the classroom.

Why we ask for it this way

The November 1 date isn't arbitrary: it's chosen so teachers are commenting on a child they've now taught for a real stretch of the school year, not the first few weeks. Forms submitted before November 1 are declined for the same reason — we want teachers writing from enough classroom time to say something true, not just first impressions.

Tips for families

- Ask teachers directly and in person if you can — a quick conversation goes further than an email alone.
- Give teachers real lead time; a form requested in early November and completed by early December is far less stressful for everyone than one requested on December 10. Make sure they know to expect an email containing access to the form.
- Unfortunately, we are not able to accept additional recommendations. Please only submit recs from the current math and English teachers.

PROVIDE PREVIOUS YEAR'S REPORT CARDS

→ **Deadline: December 15, 2026**

What it is

A copy of your child's full report card(s) from the prior academic year, showing a complete year of grades and (if available) teacher comments.

Why we ask for it this way

A full prior year gives the committee a stable baseline before layering on the current year's first-quarter snapshot. Seeing the whole year — not just a single term — helps us read grades as a pattern rather than a single data point.

Tips for families

The best way to provide report cards is by completing the records release form in Ravenna and sending it to your child's school so that they can send or upload the official reports. If this is not possible, we will help you share report cards with us for the file on time.

SCHEDULE THE PARENT/GUARDIAN MEETING (Virtual or In-Person)

→ **Deadline: December 15, 2026**

What it is

A conversation between parents/guardians and a member of the admissions team. This is a two-way conversation, not an evaluation of your child. We record these meetings so that a trustworthy summary can be written and submitted to the student's file.

Why we ask for it this way

This meeting exists for us to answer your questions as much as to hear ours answered — about program, culture, and fit for your specific child. We ask that students not join this

meeting so that parents/guardians speak more freely. Students have other opportunities to share more about themselves at different points in the process.

Tips for families

- Come with your real questions, including ones that might feel too basic to ask — there aren't any.
- Both parents/guardians are welcome to attend, but it's not required if only one is available.
- Please do **not** reserve multiple appointments in our system. We'd like to meet all of our candidates' families!

PROVIDE FIRST QUARTER / FIRST TRIMESTER REPORT CARD

→ **Deadline: December 31, 2026**

What it is

A report card reflecting your child's current school year, from whichever term (quarter or trimester) has concluded by the deadline.

Why we ask for it this way

This is the most current academic snapshot the committee sees, and it's read alongside — not instead of — the full prior year. A single term is never treated as the whole story of a student.

Tips for families

The best way to provide report cards is by completing the records release form in Ravenna and sending it to your child's school so that they can send or upload the official reports. If this is not possible, we will help you share report cards with us for the file on time.

SUBMIT THE APPLICANT VIDEO

→ **Deadline: December 31, 2026**

What it is

A short video, recorded by your child at home, that lets the committee see and hear the applicant directly — their own words, in their own space, at their own pace.

Why we ask for it this way

Not every applicant interviews with the same ease in a formal, live setting, and a home-recorded video lets a student's authentic voice come through without the pressure of a

live exchange. It's one more way we try to see the actual child, not just how they perform under interview conditions.

Tips for families

- Prompts for students to choose from will be provided by the admissions team. Please wait for these full instructions.
- There's no need to script every word or aim for a polished, retake-until-perfect result — natural is more useful to us than rehearsed.

STANDARDIZED IN-SCHOOL TESTING AND ADMISSIONS TESTING

→ **Deadline: December 31, 2026**

What it is

In-school testing refers to the standardized assessments your child already takes as part of their current school's regular testing calendar (for example, annual norm-referenced testing) — this is required and simply needs to reach us by the deadline. Your child's school may administer any of the following, to name only a few: MAP, iReady, Stanford, Iowa, CTP, ERB, DC CAPE). Admissions testing refers to a separate, optional independent-school admissions test like the SSAT or the ISEE.

Why we ask for it this way

In-school testing is required because it's something your child has already taken in the normal course of school — it costs your family no extra time or money and gives us one more longitudinal data point. Admissions testing is optional because it measures something narrower, and we don't want a family who skips it to be at a disadvantage relative to one who takes it. It's offered as an additional data point for families who feel it will help tell their child's story, not as a hidden expectation.

Tips for families

- If you're unsure whether your child's current school's testing counts as "in-school testing" for this purpose, ask our team — it's a quick check, not a judgment call you need to make alone.
- If you choose the optional admissions test, plan for it early; testing windows can be more limited than the December 31 deadline suggests.

Questions about any step above are always welcome — reach out to admissions.711@sidwell.edu at any point in the process.