



TIPS ON FILLING OUT THE COMMON APP:

I've decided to devote the entirety of this newsletter to how to fill out the Common App. It is both amazing and disappointing that the Common App is complicated enough to warrant more than 20 points of explanation! I keep hoping that it will get an overhaul, but I'm not holding my breath.

Reminder to parents: Your children are the ones who should fill out the Common App, and they're the ones who should write the essays. Please refrain from heavily editing their essays. It is critical that their authentic, 17-year-old voices shine through. If they have questions about filling out the Common App, please have them refer to this document.

Finding your way around the Common App:

You'll find a few tabs when you sign into the Common App. The "Common App" tab houses the general application that will go to all of the colleges that you apply to. You'll load in all of your colleges through the "College Search" tab, and then they will appear in the "My Colleges" tab. You'll find all of the individual college applications here. Use the "Dashboard" tab to delete any colleges from your list. Towards the right side of the "Dashboard," you'll find a button called "Application Requirements." Click on it, and you'll get a handy spreadsheet of application deadlines and requirements for all the colleges you're applying to.

TIPS ON FILLING OUT THE COMMON APP:

Common App tab:

- Complete this tab first. You'll answer basic questions about you and your parents, and you'll enter information about your high school and your courses.
- You'll be asked to note in the **Profile** section which languages you're proficient in. This does not mean fluency! If you're taking Spanish 4 or 5, for example, you are proficient!
- In the **Education** section, you can input your Cumulative GPA **if you want to**. Enter the unweighted or weighted GPA **from your transcript**. If your GPA is confusing (eg, you went to two high schools), you can leave this field blank. If you've changed high schools, you will have to write a short explanation of why you switched.
- In the **Testing** section, you can choose which test scores you want to report (you do not have to report all of the tests you have taken). You will input your highest test score from each section, and you'll add the date when you got that score. Most colleges will take those highest scores and then calculate your superscore.
- You also get to specify whether you are submitting test scores for each college you're applying to. You may decide to apply test optional to a few colleges, depending on your scores and the college's selectivity.
- Self-reporting test scores through the Common App is often enough. Most colleges will ask you to send official test scores once you're accepted.
- Report AP scores. Definitely report 4s and above. Consider submitting 3s.
- For the **Activities** section, please work on the descriptions in a separate document and then copy and paste them into the Common App. Indicate the grade level that you are going into for any summer activities. For example, if you have a job during the summer between sophomore and junior years, you would select "11." Make sure that you put your activities in the order of most important to least important.
- There's no need to submit a resume unless you have more activities/jobs than you can fit in the activities section.
- Upload your personal statement in the **Writing** section. Please work on this in a separate document and then copy and paste it here.
- You'll find the **Additional Information** area within the Writing section. Use this wisely. Do you need to explain something about your high school? Do you need to explain something about your academic history? Did you have any scheduling conflicts? Be honest, direct, and concise. Feel free to use bullets so that admissions officers can scan this section quickly. They do not want to read an extra essay!

TIPS ON FILLING OUT THE COMMON APP, CONT:

My Colleges tab:

- Be sure to select the correct button to waive your FERPA rights for letters of recommendation. You only have to do this once, and then it will apply to all of your colleges. If you click the wrong box and don't waive your rights, you can't change it later. Not waiving your right to see your letters of rec can negatively impact admissions decisions.
- Start by completing ALL of the questions under each college. ***Additional supplemental essays may pop up as you complete them***, especially once you've specified your major or academic interest.
- Think carefully and strategically about the **major/s** that you choose. If you're applying to liberal arts colleges where you can explore different majors, it may not make sense to apply to the most competitive major out there. Applying "undecided" is perfectly fine. If you have a "Why Major" supplemental essay to write, make sure that the major you write about is the one that you specify on the application.
- **Optional essays** really aren't optional! Take the opportunity to tell these colleges something more about yourself! Beware of ChatGPT and other AI programs. Colleges want to know WHO YOU ARE, so be specific and personal!
- You get to specify the teacher/s who are writing **Letters of Recommendation** for you for each college you're applying to (in other words, you can vary the teachers according to the college). You can also invite other recommenders on the "Recommenders and FERPA" page. Your colleges will indicate how many of these recommendations they will accept. Please do not overload colleges with extraneous recommendations. Your recommenders will receive an email with instructions on how to submit these letters.
- You will submit each college application separately. When you click on Review and Submit, you can save your application as a pdf, and then you can print it out (if you so desire) and proof it. Do not bypass this step!
- The Common App gets inundated around big deadlines and sometimes does crash. Nothing is worse than clicking "submit" and then watching that little disc spin and spin and spin. Do yourself the favor of submitting a few days (or even a few weeks!) before the deadline.
- If you have submitted any applications before September 1st, make sure you check the prospective student portal for any updates. Colleges have until September 1st to finalize their applications. In the past, colleges have allowed students to write and submit any new essays through that portal.

PHEW! That was a lot. GOOD LUCK! And please feel free to reach out with questions

I HAVE A FEW MORE SLOTS AVAILABLE FOR JUNIORS...

I have a few more openings for families who are interested in support as they navigate the college admissions process. We'll have fun as we home in on what students are looking for and build a well-balanced college list. We'll strategize about how to best complete applications (how do you want to show colleges who you are?), and we'll manage the stress as best we can. I like to get my juniors started in the fall, and I'm happy to talk about summers and activities with sophomores.

I limit my number of slots so that I'm able to give each of my students the attention they deserve, and so that I can continue working each year with a few first generation students from organizations that ensure access to higher ed. Please reach out. I'm more than happy to talk with you about the services I provide.

Sophomore parents: I plan to start signing on students in January to start in the fall of Junior year.

PLEASE FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO OTHER FAMILIES WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM MY APPROACH AND PERSPECTIVE!
(They can subscribe on my website)

FOLLOW ME ON INSTAGRAM @designyourpathtocollege

I help students and their families navigate the college admissions process while decreasing confusion and stress. I empower students to figure out who they are and where they belong, and I provide structure, insight, and enthusiasm as they apply to colleges that are the best fit academically, socially, and financially. Contact me for a 30 minute complimentary session to learn more!



MGS EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING

Design your path to college

www.mgsed.com | marisa@mgsed.com

914-217-9984