



## IT'S APPLICATION TIME!

For many of you, you've submitted an Early Decision and several Early Action applications. Congratulations! It can be a grueling process for many students, and many start to feel like they are limping towards the finish line. So once you've submitted, take some time to celebrate what you've done.

And once you've reveled in this big accomplishment, plow ahead and complete the rest of your applications. Waiting until winter break in December to complete everything is often a great way to ruin your vacation. Begin thinking about whether you might want to apply Early Decision 2 in January just in case your ED college doesn't come through. Putting in the time now to complete those applications will pay off, I promise. You don't want to be scrambling in mid-December.

One more thing... As you're about to submit your applications, please try not to make last minute edits to essays. These last minute edits are often not well thought out, and the risk for typos is high!

## TIPS ON FILLING OUT THE COMMON APPLICATION:

The Common Application is currently, in my humble opinion, a confusing, convoluted mess. Many of you have already started submitting some apps, so here are some tips on how to navigate it effectively for those of you who are just getting started:

- Complete the Common App tab first. This is where you'll answer basic questions about you and your parents, and you'll enter information about your high school and your courses. You'll also enter your activities (**please work on these in a separate document and then copy them into the Common App**) and upload your personal essay (again, work on that in a separate document and then copy&paste). Then you're ready to focus on each individual college application.
- In the Profile tab of the general Common App, you'll be asked about your proficiency in languages. I recommend that if you have taken at least 3 years of a language in high school, you can indicate proficiency. They are not asking for fluency!

### Letters of Recommendation:

- 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 (this page will indicate how many letters are required/optional). Your recommenders will receive an email with instructions on how to submit. They will either have to make an account on the Common App and upload it through that, or they can mail the letter to the college's Admissions Office. Please do not inundate admissions offices with extra letters; follow their guidelines.
- And here's the most important thing about Letters of Recommendation: **do not wait until your Letters of Recommendation have been submitted to submit your applications!!** Aside from a few schools where all supporting materials have to be submitted by the deadline (eg, University of Michigan and University of Maryland), you can submit your application by the deadline and then letters of recommendation can follow.

### Test Scores:

- If you are submitting scores, you will enter the highest score you've gotten on each section (and you'll indicate the date). Colleges that superscore will then take the highest scores from each section to create a new composite score.

## TIPS ON FILLING OUT THE COMMON APPLICATION, CONT:

- 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 selectivity, but submit scores to other colleges. The rule of thumb is to submit scores if you are within the mid 50%.
- If you are submitting scores to some colleges but not to others, I recommend submitting them in batches. For each deadline you're using, submit applications without test scores and then submit applications with test scores.
- And know that some colleges suppress test scores in the final review pdf. Even if you want them to see your test scores, they might not show up. Confusing and disconcerting, I know.

### Essays:

- Beware of "sneak" essays. Fill out each individual college's application thoroughly first; sometimes when you click on an answer, especially an intended major, an essay will suddenly pop up. Do not assume that all the essays are in the writing section. Wake Forest has an essay in the Contacts section!
- **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!
- Use the **Additional Information section** wisely as well (it's in the Writing Section of the general application). Do you need to explain something about your high school? Do you need to explain something about your academic history? Be direct and concise.

### Submitting your apps:

- You will submit each college application separately. When you click on Review and Submit, you'll be able to **save your application as a pdf**, and then you can print it out and **proof it**. Do not bypass this step! Get a few eyeballs to look at your applications!
- When you proof the pdfs, you'll see a weird extra space in your essays. Feel free to go back into the applications and remove them.

## REVIEWING YOUR STUDENTS' ESSAYS:

I like to remind parents how important it is for kids to feel proud of the essays they've written for college. Writing solid essays can be very affirming to students who are in the midst of a process that can feel very random and even cruel. Moreover, feeling good about their main college essays (aka personal statements) is critical as they move on to their supplemental essays.

I encourage you to read your child's essay alone (not in a room with your child) and to make sure you have the prompt with you when you are reading. The college essay is all about reflection. It provides students an opportunity to show who they are as people and as future college students. The most effective essays – the ones that stand out – share a few common features. Regardless of the prompt, an effective essay:

- Answers the prompt
- Showcases a positive trait or characteristic
- Sounds like the high school student who wrote it
- Illustrates something meaningful about the student
- Demonstrates reflection.

Please restrain yourself from editing their essays. Their essays may not be exactly what you would write or what you think they should write, but it is absolutely critical that they are authentically theirs. Trust me: admissions officers can smell the writing of a 50-something mom or dad from a mile away. You may think that you are helping their case, but it is very possible that you will end up hurting them. It is also critical that kids do their own best work; we want to make sure that the college that they end up at is the right one for them academically.

Negative feedback from parents can be incredibly demoralizing to a student who has worked so hard on an essay they are proud of. Take this advice from Alison Slater Tate, a college admissions counselor who writes for the Washington Post: "If your child asks you to read their essay, ...treat that essay like the picture they drew for you when they were 4 years old. ...Let other people give constructive criticism. Save the red ink and just tell your kid that you're proud of them." \*

## MESSAGE TO PARENTS WHO ARE LOOKING FOR ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF!

I have 1 slot remaining for a junior who would like to have assistance navigating the college admissions process. I like to start in the fall ideally (or early spring), so please let me know if you'd be interested.

I am also now filling slots for sophomores. With sophomores, I like to focus on their academics (what classes they are taking currently, and which ones they plan on taking junior and senior year) and their activities. Planning is crucial; I'm finding that kids and families make decisions early on that can have real and very unintended consequences for college admissions down the road.

Please check out my website for more information: [www.mgsed.com/services](http://www.mgsed.com/services). I'm more than happy to talk with you about what services I provide. My ultimate goal is to reduce the stress on families as they go through this process!



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*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!*



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