Common Application FAQ's

www.commonapp.org

What is the Common Application?
The Common Application is a not-for-profit organization that serves students and member institutions by providing an admission application – online and in print – that students may submit to any of our 488 members.

Why use the Common Application?
Once completed online or in print, copies of the Application for Undergraduate Admission can be sent to any number of participating colleges. The same is true of the School Report, Optional Report, Midyear Report, Final Report and Teacher Evaluation forms. This allows you to spend less time on the busywork of applying for admission, and more time on what's really important: college research, visits, essay writing, and senior year coursework.

Is it widely used?
Absolutely! Millions of Common Applications are printed and accepted by our members each year. In addition, last year almost 2.5 million applications were submitted via the Common App Online.

Is it treated fairly?
YES! Our college and university members have worked together over the past 35 years to develop the application. All members fully support its use, and all give equal consideration to the Common Application and the college's own form. Many of our members use the Common Application as their only undergraduate admission application.

Can all colleges participate?
Membership is limited to colleges and universities that evaluate students using a holistic selection process. A holistic process includes subjective as well as objective criteria, including at least one recommendation form, at least one untimed essay, and broader campus diversity considerations. The vast majority of colleges and universities in the US use only objective criteria – grades and test scores – and therefore are not eligible to join. If a college or university is not listed on this website, they are not members of the consortium. Sending the Common Application to non-members is prohibited.

What is the Common Application online school forms system?
As part of the application process, schools require a variety of information to be provided by teachers and guidance counselors who have interacted with you in the high school environment. Until last year, those forms were only available as PDF files that could be printed, copied, and mailed to the appropriate colleges. Now each teacher and counselor will have the option to complete the forms online via the Common App Online School Forms system if they desire.
There is no cost to you or high schools, and using the online system is completely optional for your teachers and counselor.
When you create an account on the Common App Online, you must first indicate what high school you attend. Once this information has been saved, you can access a 'School Forms' section of the Common App where teachers and counselors can be identified. By adding a teacher or counselor to the list of school officials, an email is triggered to the teacher or counselor with information about how to log into

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the Online School Forms system or how to opt for the "offline" or paper process. You are then able to track the progress of your various teachers and counselors via a screen within the Common App Online.

What if I'm a transfer student?
There's a Common Application for Transfer Admission as well as First-Year Admission. The Transfer Application is available primarily for online submission; however, the form can be downloaded in PDF format from our Download Forms page.

How member supplements changed in Common Application 4?
Currently, supplements are standalone forms that applicants submit and members receive separately from the Common Application. In CA4, college-specific questions will be collected in two separate areas. Most will be collected and submitted as part of the Common Application on a new Member Page. The remainder will be collected on a Writing Supplement and submitted separately after the application.

What information will be collected on the Member Page?
The Member Page is an expanded, customized version of the current Future Plans section. For the first time, members will be able to select both the common questions they ask and the custom responses they allow. Information collected can include:

- General. Entry term, degree status, housing, test-optional preference, need-based aid, merit aid.
- Academics. Academic and program interests.
- Contacts. Interactions with the institution such as campus visit or off-campus interview.
- Family. Family members who have attended or been employed by the institution.
- Recommenders. Names of teachers, coaches, or other instructors writing on the student's behalf.
- Residency. Factors to determine in-state status.
- Signature. Acknowledgement of truthfulness, Honor Code, and Early Decision commitment.

What information will be collected on the Writing Supplement?
The Writing Supplement will collect short-answer or essay-length responses to specific questions, along with submissions such as résumés, research papers, and graded assignments for colleges that wish to invite them. Students will submit using either text-entry or upload, depending on the college's preference.

Will colleges have control over what questions they ask in each section?
Yes. On the Member Page, colleges can select as many questions as they wish from a list of common questions. On the Writing Supplement, colleges can ask for as many unique writing samples as they wish.

What types of questions are not supported?
- Questions that solicit information available elsewhere on the Common Application.
- Questions that violate NACAC's Statement of Principles of Good Practice.
- Arts questions. They are collected on a free Slideroom account or an individual member's form.
- Questions about scheduling visits, interviews, tours, overnight stays, auditions, etc.
- Financial aid questions beyond the intent to apply for need- or college-specific merit-based aid.

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What writing opportunities are available on Common Application?
- The Essay. Required of all applicants.
- Additional Information. Optional for applicants who wish to report circumstances or qualifications not reflected elsewhere in the application.
- Required Explanations. Conditionally required for applicants based on responses to application questions about school discipline, criminal history, military discharge, or an interrupted education.

What has changed for the writing in the Common Application?
- There are 5 new essay prompts. They will be reviewed annually and may change, in whole or in part, based on member feedback.
- Each writing section will have an enforced 650 word limit. The essay will not allow a response shorter than 250 words.
- The extracurricular short answer question will be moved to individual member Writing Supplements for colleges that wish to review an answer to that question.
- Uploaded documents will be replaced by text-entry. Students can compose their responses directly in the application or cut-and-paste a response drafted in another word processing program.

What are the advantages of text-entry relative to uploads?
- Mobile/touchscreen devices can be better supported.
- Word count can be enforced, creating a more level playing field for applicants.

Can students format their writing?
Yes. Basic formatting (bold, italics, underline, and accented characters) will be available. In addition, text pasted from a word processing program will typically retain these styles of formatting. An analysis of 2011-12 essays revealed that 99.7% of them had either no special formatting or the basic formatting that we will support in CA4.

Will students have other opportunities to share more writing or additional submissions?
Yes. Any college that wants to collect and review writing samples may continue to do so on their Writing Supplement. In addition, any member willing to receive uploaded documents such as résumés, research papers, or graded assignments can invite these submissions on their Writing Supplement–or not–as they choose.