COMMON APP GUIDE FOR FIRST-TIME STUDENTS

https://www.commonapp.org/apply/first-time-students

STEP 1: GATHER MATERIALS

Filling out your application takes time. And if you have to keep interrupting your progress to find information, like a certificate for a continuing education course or the address of your last internship, it can take even longer. Get a head start by collecting this information before you begin:

1) Copy of your high school transcript
2) List of your activities, work, and family responsibilities
3) SAT/ACT Test scores
4) Parent/legal guardian information
5) Academic honors and achievements

STEP 2: CREATE AN ACCOUNT

Creating a first year Common App account is easy and should only take a few minutes.

1) Go to **https://apply.commonapp.org/createaccount**
2) Select the "First Year Student" button
3) Provide your login credentials (make sure you use an email you check often!)
4) Complete your registration information
5) Select "Create Account" to complete your account

STEP 3: ADD COLLEGES

Once you've created your account and explored the colleges that accept the Common App, you're ready to start adding colleges.

Adding a college is easy! You may add a college using the add button in the search results list. You can also select a college and add them using the "Add to My Colleges" button from their info screen.

Once you've added colleges, you can see them on your Dashboard and in your My Colleges tab. Keep in mind you may only add up to 20 colleges. You may adjust your list of colleges at any time.

STEP 4: ENGAGE SUPPORTERS

All colleges need things like official school forms. Many colleges will also ask for letters of recommendation.

Inviting and Assigning Recommenders:

1) From the My Colleges tab select a college and open their "Recommenders and FERPA" section.
2) If you have not done so already, you will need to complete the FERPA Release Authorization.
3) Invite recommenders using the invite button from each section. You may also use the "Invite Recommenders" button at the top.
4) Select the type of invitation you would like to send. For each invitation you will need information like their name and email address.
5) After you add a recommender, you can view their info using the Manage Recommenders button.

6) Note that teachers, parents, and other recommenders will not receive an email invitation until you assign them to a college. To assign these recommenders, go to their section within this screen. Select their name from the dropdown and use the assign button.
7) If your high school uses Naviance or another partner software, you will not invite your counselor or teachers here. There will be instructional text on this page explaining what to do next. You will still add other recommenders and advisors using the steps above.

In general, each college has their own recommendation requirements. For example, one college may need two teacher recommendations. Some colleges may not want any teacher recommendations. Colleges can also determine what kinds of other recommenders they want. Some may allow for any recommender type, whereas others only allow an employer recommendation.

STEP 5: UNDERSTAND REQUIREMENTS

It is important to stay organized as you work on your applications.

Each college needs you to complete common questions and add counselor. Beyond that their applications vary. Each college can determine their unique requirements for:

1) Deadlines
2) Application Fees
3) Personal Essay
4) Courses & Grades
5) Test Policy
6) Portfolio
7) Writing Supplements
8) Recommendations

STEP 6: PLAN ESSAYS

Sometimes writings essays can feel like the biggest part of your application. With a little bit of planning, organizing, and drafting, you can make this task more manageable.

1) Common App Personal Essay: Colleges can either make the personal essay optional or required. In the writing section of your Common App tab, you will see a table that lists each college's requirements.
2) College-specific questions: Many colleges include short answer questions or essay prompts within this section. You can find specific information about each college's individual writing prompts here.
3) Writing supplements: Some colleges use a separate writing supplement. Not all colleges have a writing supplement. Some colleges only request this supplement based on how you answer other questions. You can find more information about writing supplements on the Dashboard or your My Colleges tab.

STEP 7: SUBMIT APPLICATIONS

Review and submit your applications.

Submission is a three-step process:
1) Reviewing your application.
2) Paying the application fee.*
3) Submitting your application.

* While some colleges may charge an application fee, others have no fee to apply. And, many will offer fee waivers under certain circumstances, including financial need, veteran status, and more. Using either the Common App fee waiver, which your counselor must confirm, or a college-specific fee waiver, you will not be required to pay the fee to submit your application.