



GUIDE TO THE

common
app



Prepare. Apply. Achieve!

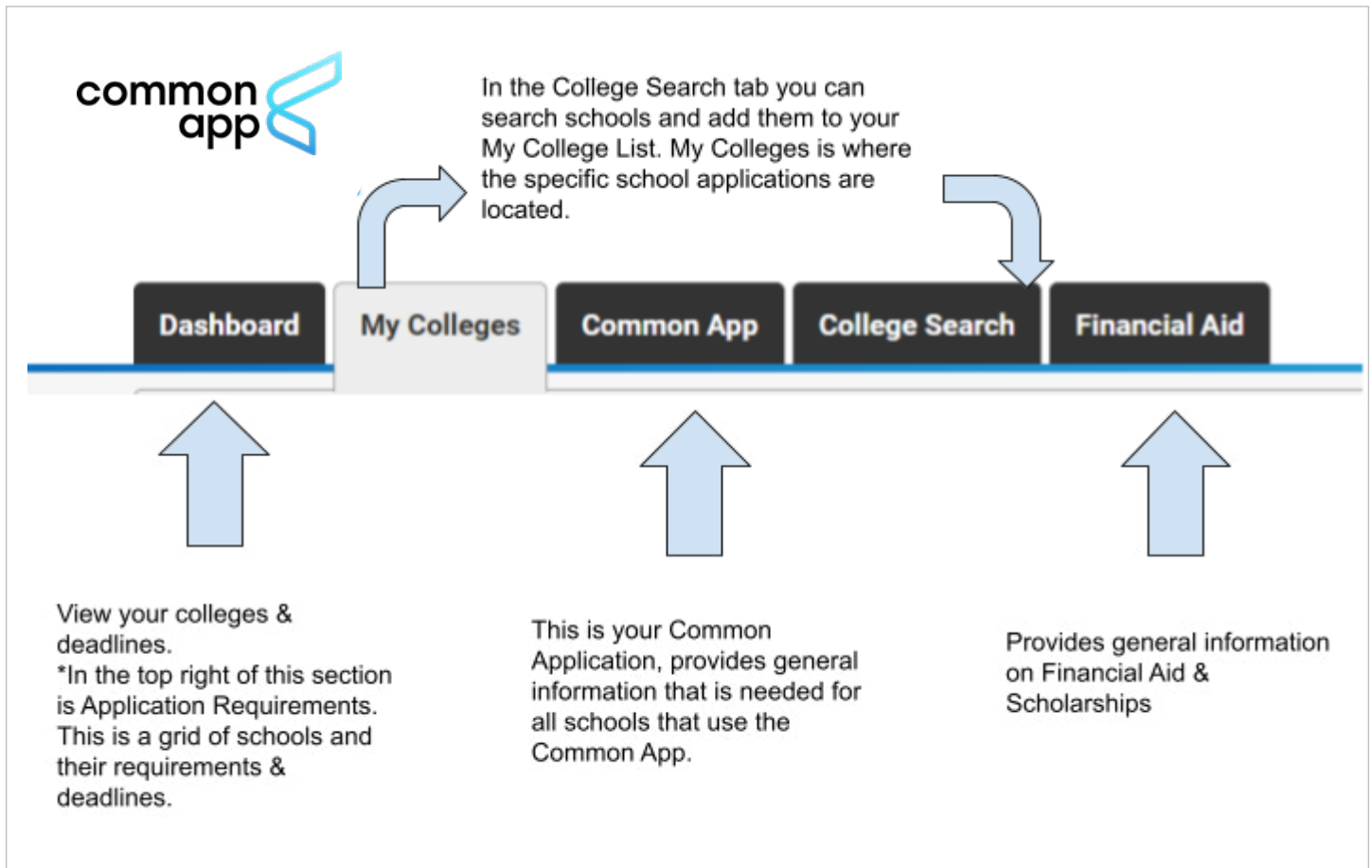
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A Guide to the Common Application



The Common Application or Common App is the most used college application tool. It allows students to apply to over 1,000 schools in one central place! Below is a guide and some tips for completing the application. Below is a breakdown of the application, what you need to complete in each section, and some tips to help you along the way.

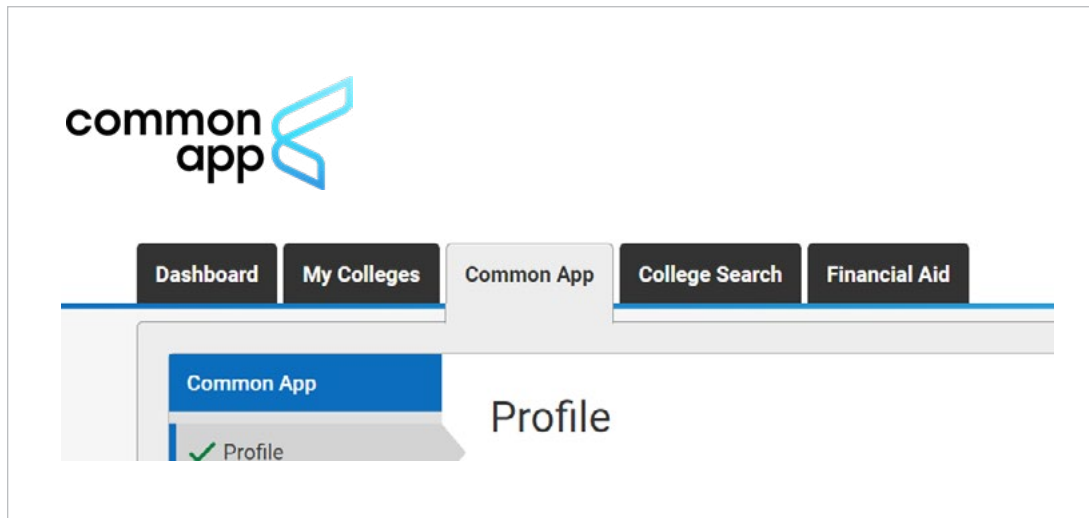
General Overview



The Common App Tab

Create an Account & Start the basics early!

Students can create a [Common App](#) account at any time during their junior year. All work in the Common App tab will be saved for when it's time to apply!



The **Common Application** is broken into 6 required sections and 1 additional that may be required by certain schools.

1. Profile

The information asked for in this section is about you, basic contact information, and demographics.

Pro Tip: Language Section - Most students select English because that is the language taught in high school. Don't be afraid to add in additional languages that you have exposure to, it speaks to your heritage and language skills. There is an Other option if your language is not listed.

2. Family

Household and family information. It is a good idea to have a parent or guardian help with this section.

Pro Tip: It is good to list if/where your parents went to school as well as their job. This helps colleges frame your background, leaving something out can cause questions, unless you select that you have limited information about the parent.

The Common App Tab

3. Education

This section is for your school information, it is best to complete with a transcript on hand that has your final junior year grades and updated GPA information. You will also be asked to input your senior year classes, waiting till you start school senior year is OK for this section.

Pro Tip: Lead with your core classes when listing courses. Also, be honest! If you drop or replace a class you will need to report that to every school you apply to. Also, this is where your Academic Honors are located, keep track of any awards in High School, it's also okay to not have any.

4. Testing

The testing section asks you to report the test that you would like to report with your application. NOT every test you have ever taken. Decide the testing that you would like to show in your application and list it here. If you are taking future tests, you can note that as well. Keep in mind that if you list a future test you will need to submit it when the score becomes available. Later, in each school's application, you can select information on test-optional, if the school offers that.

Pro Tip: Most schools will ask for an official score report for SAT / ACT scores in addition to the self-reported.

5. Activities

The Common App only allows you to report 10 activities and describe them in 150 characters, this can be a challenge. See our resources on the Activity List for more information.

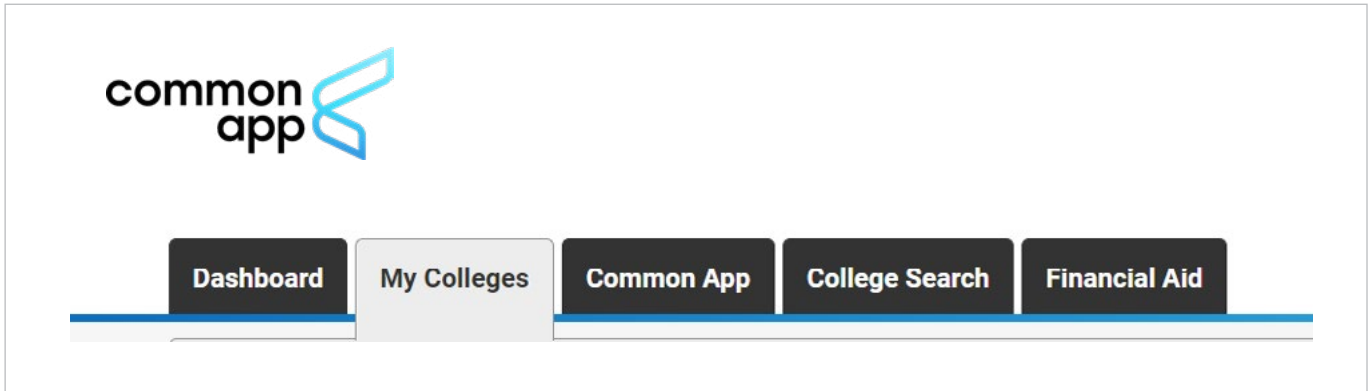
Pro Tip: It is not about the number of activities you have however level of commitment, time spent, and impact of the activity that should stand out.

6. Writing

The main essay is a very important part of your application. Showing who you are and what you value. There are 7 prompts to choose from, see our resources on the Main Essay for how to prepare.

Pro Tip: For some colleges the Main Essay may be optional. It is important to look inside each school's application because they have a version of the main essay in their application.

My Colleges Tab



The **My Colleges** tab is used to complete your school-specific applications. This portion does refresh year after year, before August of your senior year use this as a guide only. It is where you will answer questions specific to that school and can submit them. It is also where letters of recommendation are located.

Rice University ▲		
College Information	←	Provides information about the school & deadlines
Application		
Questions	←	Primary Application, questions about major & other school specific items
Recommenders and FERPA	←	
Review and Submit - Common App	←	Final step
Writing Supplement		
Questions		
Review and Submit - Writing Supplement	←	Some schools include additional writing in the questions portal, other have an additional section.

Letters of recommendation can be requested here. If your high school uses Naviance or something similar please consult with school counselor before completing this section.



Additional Tips

Introduce yourself early to the Common App: Current junior, you can start this now.

Common App does a reboot on July 31st-August 1st: Some/all information in the My Colleges tab can be removed based on the school.

The “Additional Information” section: This is only if it is 100% necessary, do not add more information about what you have already talked about. It can however be used to provide context of a major life event that may have happened during high school.

Use the Application Preview: When completing a school-specific application in the My Colleges section you can select “Application Preview.” This will help you avoid making simple errors.

It’s okay to start your writing in another document: It is important to work on items in a Google Doc or other platform to avoid losing your hard work. This is especially important for the Activity list and Main Essay.