



Step-by-Step Guide to the New Common Application

1. Log into www.commonapp.org (.ORG, not .com)
2. Create an account and write down your username and password somewhere safe.
3. Once you have logged in you will be brought to a screen that has four tabs that can be clicked on. They are: **Dashboard**, **My Colleges**, **Common App**, and **College Search**. *Whichever tab you are in there will be a help center located to the right of your screen to assist you. Next to the words "Help Center" is a red arrow that will direct you to it. However, there are also frequently asked questions listed that can also be clicked on.*
4. Click on **College Search** to compile a list of schools that you will be applying to. You can just enter the names or add additional information to locate the school you want added to your list. Select the college from the **Result List** and then click **Add**. Click **Result List** and then click **Criteria** to add another school.
5. Once you have added all of the colleges you like, click **Dashboard** and you will see your colleges listed there. *Please note that **Dashboard** provides a list of tasks under each school, which will help you keep track of things that still need to be completed. Additionally, you can add or delete schools at any time. To add follow steps listed under number 4 of this guide and to delete click on the trash bin icon on the right within **Dashboard**.*
6. Before continuing you must complete the **Education** section within the **Common App tab**. Click on the Common App tab located towards the top of the screen. Then click on Education located to the left of the screen. Complete each question within that section. When you have done so successfully a green check mark will appear next to the Education section. At this point you must complete the FERPA waiver, even if you have already done so. Please see the following step for instructions on how to complete the FERPA waiver.
7. **Now that schools have been added and you have completed the Education portion you can complete the FERPA waiver.** First, click on **Dashboard** located on the top left of the screen, then choose any school from your list. You will notice that there is an **Application** heading that has three options listed under it: Common Application, Member Questions, and Assign Recommenders. Next to each option it will say **Incomplete**. Please click on Incomplete located next to Assign Recommenders. You will then be directed to the **FERPA Release Authorization**, click on that. After reading the instructions check the box and click continue. Next you will complete the waiver. It is recommended that you select "I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf." When you are done click Save. Once you have completed these steps, you must sign into your Naviance account and match your common app account. Please follow the following steps to do that.
8. **Common App Account Matching through Naviance:** After signing into your Naviance account click on the Colleges tab, then click on Colleges I'm Applying To. The FERPA waiver will appear at the top of the page. Enter your Common App e-mail address into the box provided and click on Match. Once you have done that the FERPA waiver is complete.



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9. Click My Colleges. The first college in the list will be open. You will see 3 or 4 sections under each school: **Questions, Assign Recommenders, Submission,** and depending on the school **Writing Supplement.** Each section listed must be completed.

10. It is in your best interest to view the **Writing Supplement** section of each school that you have added first. This way you'll know how many you need to write and what you should be writing about. When you write the required essays copy and paste each prompt for this college, AND its word or character limit, onto a word doc so you know exactly what essays you need to write, how long or short they must be, and which ones overlap and can be reused. Do not compose your essays in the Common App. Once they are completed they can be copied and pasted back into the **Writing Supplement** section.

11. Common App section (tab 3 at the top): This section is pretty straightforward. Items with a red asterisk are required. Enter the data and you can click Continue or just click on the next section; it auto saves. The little green checks appear in places where that section is technically done—but this is NOT exactly true from your standpoint! The checks mean that the section is either complete (by you) or that the data isn't required in order for you to submit the Common App. It is highly recommended that you fill in the Activities section, which isn't required and gives you a misleading little green check; it would certainly be a big disadvantage if you left the Activities section blank because it appears to admissions officers that you were not involved in anything in 4 years!

12. Submitting: When the Common App section has 6 green checkmarks, and when a college in the My Colleges section has 2 or 3 checkmarks (for Questions, Assign Recommenders, and Writing Supplement) THEN you are ready to click "Submission – Common App" for that college. You will submit your applications one at a time, when each college is ready. You will need to complete the 6 sections of the Common App before you can submit the first college application.



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New Common App Breakdown

1. Profile (8 parts)

Personal Info, Address, Contact Details: these are all pretty straightforward.

Demographics: This section on the new Common App is optional, but if you are bringing diversity, completing this section may help you in the admissions process.

Religious Preference: (a sub-section of Demographics) If you want to list your faith, do. If you are a Christian and you are applying to Christian schools, you should. If you are from a diverse faith background, then listing this will also be an asset.

Geography: also pretty straightforward. It doesn't seem to want to know where you have lived outside of the US, if you have.

Languages: DO list the one/s you have studied in school, and of course list all languages you speak at home.

Citizenship: It is highly recommended that you include your social security number.

Common App Fee Waiver: There are special circumstances that make applicants eligible for fee waivers; many require particular socioeconomic standings. If you think you may qualify, please see your guidance counselor.

2. Family: (5 parts)

Household/Parent 1/Parent 2/Step Parents: This section allows you to describe with whom you primarily live and also up to 2 step parents. I think one of the main tips for this section is to list your parents' actual education level; whatever level your parent FINISHED. There's no option here for "some college" so if you check "College" it will look as if your parent is a college graduate, which may not be the case. List the level of education your parent *completed*.

Siblings: Here list the grade your sib is currently in, if it's K-12. For the last three options, if your sibling only finished high school and then went on to work, check High School. If your sibling got a GED, check that. But if your sibling is currently in college or graduated from college, check College. Do not check College if your sibling attended some college but did not graduate

3. Education: 9 parts

School: In this section search for your school. **Date of entry** September of 2010 if you've been there all 4 years, but if you've transferred in use that date. **Graduation date** is June 1, 2014.

Other School: Any other high school you have attended.



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Education Interruption: If you check one of these boxes you will be asked to explain it on the Writing page under Required Explanation (word limit 650).

Colleges and Universities: DO NOT list AP classes here, that comes later. **Degree Earned** is not required, so if you didn't get a degree from the course, leave this blank.

CBO: CBO means Community Based Organization. This section would like to know if any free organization helped you prepare for college. By Counselor, they mean the person in charge there—your mentor.

Grades: Class rank – None, Kennedy does NOT rank. Your GPA is weighted; Mrs. Black and Ms. Tyson have your cumulative GPA if you need it.

Current Year Courses: Report every class you will be taking senior year, including independent study courses, college courses, and online courses. Use the same title your school uses, capitalize AP, and do not abbreviate the title of the course. Give the course credit value in numbers that will show on your transcript. Courses are worth .5 or 1 depending on how often class is scheduled. Physical Education is .5 where as English 12 is 1. Please ask your guidance counselor if you have any questions.

Honors: Here you can list your top 5 awards or honors that you have received. List the most impressive ones. Make sure the title is spelled correctly, and add a few words to explain it if the name doesn't get the message across. The reader will not always be familiar with our school and so he or she will not know what some awards are for. Keep any added words very brief.

PG=post grad (extra year of high school after high school), FY=freshman year, SO=sophomore year, JR=junior year.

Future Plans: You have only 2 sections here: Career Interest and Highest Degree you intend to Earn. For Career Interest list what you are currently interested in, to give the colleges an honest idea of what you might like to do and a little better idea of who you are. For Highest Degree Intended, the question wants to know how much college you see yourself doing in the future. School beyond a BA is called "Graduate School." Your options for Graduate School (Grad School) are listed after Bachelors in this pull down on the Common App. They include:

MA—this is a Masters degree and can take 1-4 years after your BA

MBA—a Masters in Business Administration

JD—Juris Doctorate, a law degree

MD/DO/DVM/DDS—Medical, veterinary and dental degrees

PhD—Doctorate (the PhD comes after an MA and can be in nearly any subject.)

Other—things like DPT (Doctorate of Physical Therapy)

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4. Testing: (1-10 sections possible, but most of you will have around 3)

Unless you are applying to only Test Score Optional colleges, then you will need to report your test scores on the ACT or the SAT. You may also report your scores on AP, SAT Subject Tests, TOEFL, PTE or IELTS.

The second question on this: do you need to take a test in order to graduate? The answer is NO.

5. Activities: (up to 10 Activities possible)

YOU SHOULD NOT LEAVE THIS SECTION BLANK even though it is not required. You can list up to 10 activities, and you do want to show your colleges how you have spent your time when you are not in school. Family Responsibilities and Work are options here, as are Cultural and Religious activities, and even Other, where you could list hobbies you are passionate about. If you research some subject on your own, list that as Academic, unless your research is a hobby then list it as Other.

For this section you are going to have to spell everything very carefully and have someone proofread it with you. Be brief in your explanations, but do be clear. It is recommended you state which activities you would be interested in continuing; the colleges understand that you mean "if something similar is available at your school."

Hours spent per week and weeks spent per year can only be entered as numbers, so do your best, be honest and estimate.

The details, honors and accomplishments section allows you ONLY 150 characters (not words) WITH spaces.

Remember, you can list up to 10 Activities. Choose your favorites.

6. Writing (3-4 sections; most of you will have 3)

Personal Essay: 650 word limit. Here you will copy/paste in your main essay after you have made a final draft as a word.

Disciplinary History: Here you will answer two questions: have you ever been in trouble at school, and have you ever been in trouble with the law. The first question about school does not want you to list detentions and tardies. This is for more serious infractions where the Principal or Vice Principal had to get involved. If your counselor is reporting it, then you need to, so find out what the administration wants you to do. If you are reporting something, then you will need to complete the Required Explanation section.

For the second question about the law, this one is asking about arrests and convictions, even for misdemeanors. If the court has expunged or annulled (etc) the case, then you don't need to list it. If



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they haven't, you do. If you are reporting something, then you will need to complete the Required Explanation section.

Additional Information: 650 word limit. This is where you can explain a situation that you feel the colleges need to know about, like maybe you had an illness in your family, or maybe you were ill. You might also explain good news! If it's important to your story, and if it hasn't been addressed elsewhere, then this is the place where you can be sure to let the colleges know. Also, if there was not enough room in the activities section for everything then you can add that within this section.