



COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSENTIALS

What You'll Need
Through the Process



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Applying to college is a long and grueling process that can undoubtedly seem overwhelming at first glance. But, if you keep track of your deadlines, have essential documents handy, and communicate with your teachers and counselors, the process becomes much easier. To help you understand all the college application essentials, we've compiled a list of things you'll **definitely need**, **probably need**, and **might need**. We hope this will help you conquer the daunting college application process and take one step closer to getting into your dream school.



THINGS YOU'LL DEFINITELY NEED

- **A List of Schools You're Applying To** - Obviously, you cannot apply to college without having schools on your list in the first place. Make your list very carefully, keeping in mind reach, target, and safety schools.
- **Personal Statement** - Your personal statement is a very crucial part of your applications. Colleges need to know who you are and what your story is, so make sure your essay highlights what makes you stand out from the crowd.
- **Letters of Recommendation** - Admissions officers want to understand what you are like in the classroom, and how your teachers and counselors view you. Make sure to choose a teacher who knows you and your strengths, and talk to them about recommendation letters as early as possible. Get to know your college counselor and teachers on a deeper level. The better they know you, the stronger these letters will be.



- **High School Transcripts** - Your transcripts show the classes you've taken and the grades you've received. This academic record is essential for admissions officers to determine whether or not you're ready for the rigor at their institution! Your transcript helps admissions officers understand your academic abilities, as well as your areas of interest and prowess.
- **Mid-Year Report** - A strong performance in your mid-year report can boost your profile if you've been deferred from your ED/EA school. It usually includes your GPA and updated grades from your first semester of senior year, and is submitted directly to the school by your counselor. This may give your Regular Decision application the edge it needs to stand out from the rest of the pool.
- **Final Year Report** - As the school year comes to an end, your college counselor must send one final update to provide a full picture of how you've performed during your senior year. It is very important to keep up your grades for the final year report because if you experience a major fall in grades, your acceptance could be rescinded! You never want that!
- **SAT/ACT scores** - The chances that at least one of the schools on your list requires standardized test scores is very high. Make note of the test dates, registration deadlines, and the day scores are released to have enough time to send them to colleges. Plan accordingly and study hard - aim to get a strong score on your first or second sitting.



- **List of Extracurricular Activities** - Colleges want to know that you have interests outside academics! Your extracurriculars should demonstrate leadership, tangible achievements, and commitment throughout your time in high school. Hopefully you've been actively pursuing extracurricular activities from the very beginning of high school.
- **List of Honors** - If you've won a national competition or had research published in a journal while you've been in high school, you definitely want colleges to see those achievements! These awards can help set you apart from your peers, so fill them out very carefully and highlight the honors that have made the most impact.
- **Application Fee** - You will have to pay a fee for every college application you submit, and typically, these fees cost around \$50-\$75 per application. Stanford University has the highest application fee at \$90. All colleges allow students to waive the application fee if they have demonstrated financial need. For example, the fee can be waived for if your family receives public assistance or aid with food services, if you live in a subsidized or foster home, or if your school guidance counselor can provide a supporting statement.



THINGS YOU'LL PROBABLY NEED

- **Different Application Systems** - While most schools use the Common Application, you might have to use different platforms if you are applying to schools within the University of California or ApplyTexas Systems. You may also use the Coalition Application, so be prepared to get acquainted with other platforms!
- **Subject Tests** - Although many schools do not require the SAT subject tests, they'll consider the scores if you submit them! Subject tests can help showcase your best academic areas to admissions officers. They aren't offered every SAT session, so plan in a way that ensures your scores can be sent to colleges.
- **Supplemental Essays** - Supplemental essays convey your interest in a given school, and show why you might be a good fit to admissions officers. Almost every school asks why you are interested in their institution or has some sort of question they'd like answered. Some schools, like Amherst College, ask about an extracurricular you're passionate about, which is a good opportunity for you to mention how you'd continue the activity in college. Pay close attention to the prompts and be as specific to each school as possible when answering them.

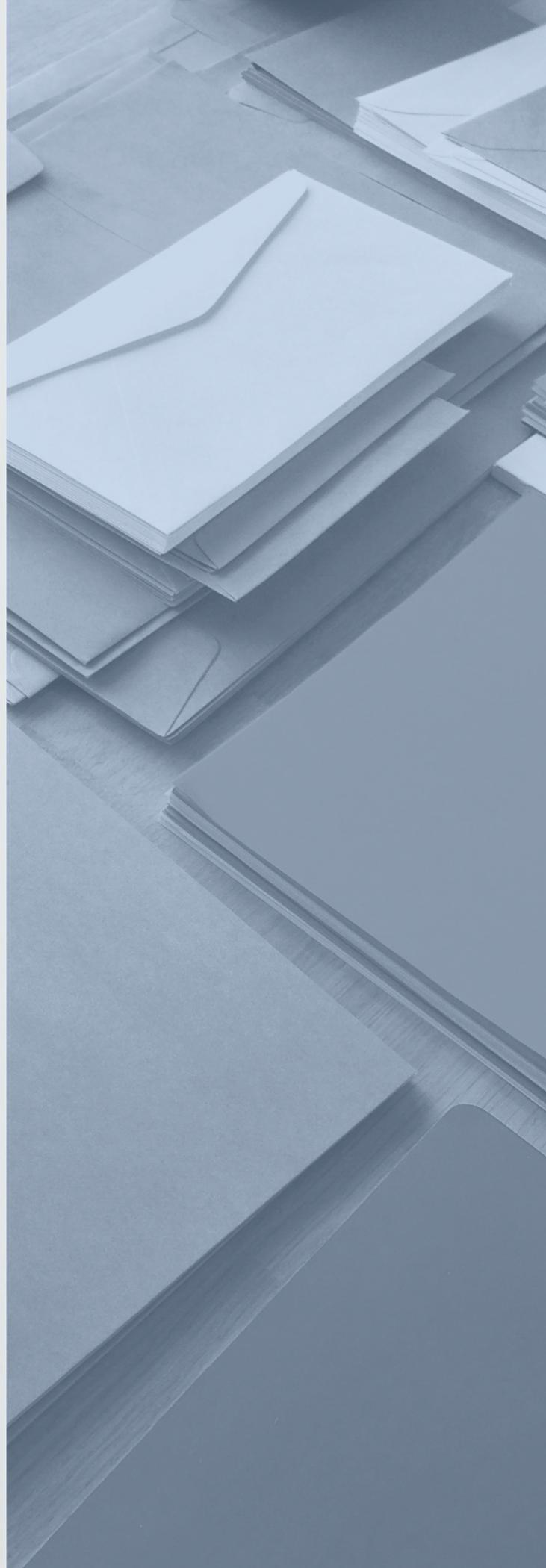


- **Interviews** - Although every college does not require an interview, chances are, one of your colleges might ask you to interview with them! Some schools, such as Georgetown, require all applicants to interview. The opportunity to interview with a school, whether with an admissions representative or an alumnus, gives you a chance to show them your character, what you're like as a person, put a face to the name, and add color to your application.
- **FAFSA** - If you're applying for financial aid, you should be filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. To fill this out, you'll need the following information about you or your parents:
 - Social Security Number
 - Tax Return
 - Alien Registration Number (if not a citizen)
 - Bank Statements and Records of Investments (if applicable)
 - Records of Untaxed Income (if applicable)



THINGS YOU MIGHT NEED

- **Peer Recommendation Letters** - Dartmouth College and Davidson College are two schools which ask for peer recommendations. Dartmouth suggests you pick anyone who knows you well - a friend, a co-worker, a cousin, or sibling, while Davidson recommends a classmate or a close friend, as opposed to a family member. This recommendation can be a meaningful way to show what you're going to be like as a roommate, friend, and classmate.
- **Arts or Research Supplement** - If you have a skill in the arts - whether you're a visual artist, music composer, stage actor, or film director - and believe you have work(s) that can highlight your talent, consider submitting an arts supplement if a college allows you to do so. Or, if you've conducted research in a particular area and have been published in a journal, add this as a research supplement. However, since these are not required, only submit them if you believe they can really set you apart from the rest of the candidates. Professors are often the ones looking at them, and they are seeking the best of the best.



- **Letter of Continued Interest** - If you've been deferred from your Early Decision or Early Action school(s), or waitlisted by a top school, you should definitely send a letter of continued interest. Admissions officers want to know that you are still thinking about their school, so emphasize your interest in the college, advocate for your strengths, and provide any updates such as improved scores, academic achievement, significant progress in a project, etc.
- **Graded Paper** - Some schools (for example, Brown), ask you to submit a graded paper from a humanities or social studies course written during the academic year of your application. Choose a paper that best reflects your writing style and one you are proud of! And of course, select a paper that received a strong grade and represents your work quality.
- **ZeeMee video** - More than 200 schools, including Emerson College, University of Rochester, and Trinity College, make use of technology to let students make videos on the ZeeMee app. These videos prompt students to answer a few questions and share them directly with admissions officers. The app is similar to an Instagram feed where you can upload videos about yourself and activities you enjoy, and allow admissions officers a chance to see your personality shine through.
- **Resumé** - Most schools don't require resumé's, but some schools like Johns Hopkins, Babson, and Smith allow you the opportunity to submit one. If you believe your application doesn't capture all of your achievements and activities, you can use the resumé to further highlight your accomplishments and honors. However, don't be too repetitive - admissions officers have a lot of reading material to cover!



- **NCAA/NAIA Registration** - If you are an athlete applying to a Division I or II school, register with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center or the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletes (NAIA) Eligibility Center by the summer of your junior year. If you wish to play Division III, you can create a Profile Page in the NCAA website to receive relevant updates.
- **Disciplinary or Academic Explanation Essay in the Additional Information Section** - If your GPA experienced a sudden drop due to a death in the family or severe illness, use the Additional Information section of the Common App to explain the circumstances. Similarly, use this section to elaborate on any disciplinary action that might exist on your record.

Submitting all the necessary documents and information on time is a big part of the college application process. So start gathering them as soon as possible - a missing letter or transcript should never what gets in between you and the right school for you.

