



**WHAT COUNTS IN  
THE COMMON APP  
HONORS SECTION?**

**A CHECKLIST**

# WHAT COUNTS IN THE COMMON APP HONORS SECTION? A CHECKLIST

The Common Application honors section can be a confusing component for many students. The instructions say, “If you have received any honors related to your academic achievements beginning with the ninth grade or international equivalent, please indicate the number of honors. If you received more than five, please add the five most important to you.”

Often, many applicants aren’t sure exactly what counts as an “academic honor” and how successful students should be in a given field or subject in order for it to be considered for a spot on the Common App. Truth is, these boundaries are very loose and you can include a lot of different types of awards in the Common App. Use the checklist below to see what you should include in this section.

	Have you won the award while you’ve been in high school?
	Is the award related to an academic subject, such as a math or physics olympiad?
	Is the award merit-based, such as a National Merit Scholarship?
	Have you won any arts-based awards such as in visual art or creative writing?
	Have you received any awards for strong performances in the classroom?
	Have the awards you’ve received been in a school-wide, regional, state-wide or national context?
	Have you been part of any honors societies?
	Have you won an AP scholar award?
	Have you conducted research and been published in a journal?
	If you’re a more creative writer, have you been published in any literary reviews?

	Have you won any community service awards?
	Have you won any character or sportsmanship awards in athletics?
	Is what you're thinking of a common achievement for a high school student? Or, would including this award help you stand out?
	Does the award show your impact in your field of choice?
	Would the award help demonstrate your prowess in your prospective major?
	Have you written the award in such a way that highlights not only what the award is, but also what it was for?
	Does the honor get repeated in your activities list? Remember that each entry should add new information and you should avoid repetition in your Common App as much as possible.

Hopefully, you now have a clearer idea of the entries that will make up your Common App Honors Section. When in doubt, ask your high school guidance counselor whether something is a good fit. But, generally, if it's something that showcases your strength in a certain field and has a certain degree of academic or personality component to it, you should be able to add it.