



College Application Requirements

There's More Than Just a Form

Applications vary from college to college, but most require some or all of the following parts:

Application Form

In the old days (well, a few years ago), you had one application option—a handwritten or typed form. Today you can often apply online directly to an individual school or use the Common Application, entering your information just once.

Application Fee

The average college application fee is around \$35. (Some colleges charge up to \$60, while others don't have an application fee at all.) The fee is usually nonrefundable, even if you're not offered admission. Many colleges offer fee waivers for applicants from low-income families. If you need a fee waiver, call the college's admissions office for more information.

High School Transcript

This form is filled out by an official of your high school. If it comes with your admissions materials, you should give it to the guidance office to complete as early as possible. Some colleges send this form directly to your school after receiving your application.

Admissions Test Scores

At many colleges, you have to submit SAT[®], SAT Subject Test[™], or ACT test scores. Test scores are a standard way of measuring a student's ability to do college-level work.

Letters of Recommendation

Your entire application should create a consistent portrait of who you are. Many private colleges ask you to submit one or more letters of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or other adult who knows you well. When asking someone to write such a letter, be sure to do so well before the college's deadline.

Essay

If you're applying to private colleges, your essay often plays a very important role. Whether you're writing an autobiographical statement or an essay on a specific theme, take the opportunity to express your individuality in a way that sets you apart from other applicants.

Interview

This is required or recommended by some colleges. Even if it's not required, it's a good idea to set up an interview because it gives you a chance to make a personal connection with someone who will have a voice in deciding whether or not you'll be offered admission. If you're too far away for an on-campus interview, try to arrange to meet with an alumnus in your community.

Audition/Portfolio

If you're applying for a program such as music, art, or design, you may have to document prior work by auditioning on campus or submitting an audiotape, slides, or some other sample of your work to demonstrate your ability.

The Sum of the Parts

Your entire application should create a consistent portrait of who you are and what you'll bring to the college. The more the pieces of the puzzle support one impression, the more confident the admissions committee will be in admitting you. If the essay or interview contradicts information you gave on other forms, you may cause them to have doubts about accepting you.

If all the parts of your application are filled out honestly and carefully, with an attention to your conviction that each school is a good match for you, you will come across in the best light possible.