

Tips for Filling Out the Common Application Profile, Family, & Education Sections

Profile Section

Most students can complete the entire Profile section within a few minutes. These tend to be simple questions that provide admissions officers a quick peek into an applicant's background and upbringing.

Personal Information

- This may go without saying, but please use proper capitalization on this page and throughout your application in general! You would be amazed by the number of students who forget formal rules of grammar when completing their college applications. Nothing says "I don't care" more than a sloppy document riddled with tiny errors.
- The "gender identity" box on this section is optional. If you don't feel comfortable choosing among the male/female options, you have 100 characters (including spaces) to provide extra details on your gender identity.

Address

- The permanent home address you list here is important, as it's the place where your acceptance packets will be mailed!
- Remember to include an alternate or temporary addresses here, because colleges will be mailing you important materials.

Contact Details

- Students can elect to supply their home phone number, cell phone number, or both. Any of these options are acceptable, provided the voicemail greeting attached to these numbers is appropriate for a college professional. If an alumnus calls you to schedule a college interview, how will he react if he's greeted by a prerecorded, "Yo, what's up?"

Demographics

- All of the questions about religious preferences, race, and ethnic identity are optional. However, we still recommend that most students fill them out. Colleges use your demographic information to better understand who you are, where you're from, and how your personal characteristics might enrich their college campuses. Attempting to "hide" your cultural background by omitting these questions may send the message that you distrust colleges to use this information in your best interest. Additionally, it's likely that admissions officers can deduce elements of your family history based on your surname and/or your parents' names. Unless you have a strong objection to sharing your personal background, consider answering these questions openly and honestly.

Geography

- Whether you were born and raised in New York City, or you've spent the last 17 years traveling from country to country, your geographic history is part of your identity. Your responses here help admissions officers create a context for your personal growth and development.

Language

- Let's be clear about the meaning of "proficient." If you can skillfully speak, read, or write in a particular language, you are considered proficient. For most students, simply studying a second language in high school does not make them competent in that language. Many students, therefore, are proficient in just one language. Use the rule of thumb that you should include it if you speak it at the conversational level. Colleges ask this to inform them in building both a diverse and multi-talented class.

Citizenship

- Your status as a domestic (U.S.) or international (non-U.S.) citizen has no bearing on your admissibility to college. Colleges ask this question because it helps them understand how you'll be able to pay for college, whether through private funds, or a combination of institutional, state, and/or federal aid.
- Undocumented immigrants occasionally have the opportunity to provide more details about their citizenship status on colleges' supplemental forms.
- Most colleges don't prohibit undocumented students from attending, but a few do. For advice on completing your application as an undocumented immigrant, read [A Guide to the Citizenship Section of the Common App \(Can I Still Get Into College if I'm Undocumented?\)](#).

Common App Fee Waiver

- Students who feel that paying application fees (which can reach up to \$90 for some colleges) presents a financial burden can request a Common App fee waiver. All first-year students who utilize this option will need this information verified by their school counselor, which comes in the form of a fee waiver document that can be mailed or electronically sent to colleges.
- Please note that simply checking the "yes" box here does not negatively impact one's chances of admission, even for colleges that are need-aware.

Family Page

The questions on the Family section of the application continue to paint a picture your unique upbringing. As this page asks for specific details related to parents' educational background, students may need mom or dad's help in answering some of these questions.

Household

- Colleges know there are many types of families. So whether your parents are married, separated, divorced, never married, domestic partners, or widowed, you can find the appropriate option on the drop down menu.
- If your family includes step-parents, students have the option of listing those individuals, as well.

Parent 1, 2

- Colleges want to understand you and your achievements given the context of the environment in which you were raised. So whether your parents graduated from high school, college, or graduate school; whether they are employed as bankers, beekeepers, or bookkeepers; your family history helps tell the story of who you are and where you've come from.

Sibling

- Colleges sometimes use sibling information to better predict your family's financial need (will your parents be paying for one college tuition next year or two?), and also to determine possible legacy connections. If your sister is a junior at Yale University, the admissions officers at Yale might give your application a little extra consideration, thanks to the family connection.

Note: These sections ask you to list information such as the education levels and occupation levels of your parents, siblings, and stepparents. You'll also be asked whether these relatives are living or deceased. Colleges are looking to gain insight into your background and circumstances. For example, if you've faced tremendous hardship, adcoms will factor this information in when making their admissions decisions.

If you have faced personal circumstances that affect your transcript or other aspects of your application, you should explain them in the Additional Information section or your essay. Doing so allows colleges to understand how your schoolwork was impacted and could influence their decisions.

Education

Current or Most Recent Secondary School

- Current high school seniors entered high school in 08/2017 or 09/2015, and their graduation dates are probably 05/2021.
- If your high school education didn't follow the traditional 4-year path, you may need to check one of the boxes that ask about academic progression. Students who will be graduating early or late, taking time off, or pursuing a gap year will need to provide some explanatory details.
- You can locate your school counselor's official job title, email address, and phone number on your high school website. When in doubt, ask Mrs. Haggerty!

Other Secondary Schools

- Students who attended more than one high school will need to provide a brief description (no more than 250 words) explaining why they left each previous secondary school.

Colleges & Universities

- Only students who have taken college coursework (and earned college credits) need to complete this section. Attendance at pre-college summer programs (that did not award college credit) can be listed on the activities page of your application.
- If you received a grade for your college courses, be sure your high school includes a copy of your college transcript along with your school report.

Grades

- The only required question on this page asks for your graduating class size. We generally recommend that students leave the optional questions blank, unless (a) they are absolutely certain about their class rank and/or GPA, and (b) they want to self-report a strong rank and/or GPA to colleges. Most colleges only focus on a student's official rank and/or GPA as it's reported to them on the school report submitted by the counseling office.
- Colleges will have your transcript and will likely recalculate your GPA according to their weights and measures.

Current or Most Recent Year Courses

- Even though colleges may see a list of your senior-year courses on your high school transcript, it's imperative that you complete this section thoroughly.
- We recommend that students list their core academic courses first (English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language), followed by any electives (business, art, orchestra, etc.).
- Even though you will be able to select the appropriate course "level" on the drop-down menu (regular, accelerated, honors, AP, IB, etc.), we also suggest that students include these designations on the course title line, where appropriate. For example, students should list the course title as "AP Psychology," rather than just "Psychology."

Honors

- Many high schools do not award special academic honors. If you have received academic honors (such as National Honor Society, National Merit Commended Scholar, or other achievements), remember that you have 100 characters (including spaces) to list (and potentially explain) your awards.
- Achievements that are more extracurricular in nature – such as those related to athletics, art, or music – are generally best saved for the activities section of the application. But if your activities page is full and you don't have other honors to include, feel free to use your judgement when listing them here!

Community-Based Organizations

- CBOs – such as Boys & Girls Clubs, STEP: Student Expedition Program, and Upward Bound – provide free assistance with the college application process. If you've worked with one of these community or non-profit organizations, that information can be included here.

Future Plans

- Colleges are curious to know where you picture yourself after graduating college. If you have a particular career in mind, list it here. If your preferred career isn't included on the drop-down menu, select "other" and enter your profession on the line provided.
- Remember that you can change your response to this (and any other question on the Common App) in between college submissions. If you're applying as a business major to College A, it would make sense to include a business-related career and degree on the future plans section. But if you're applying as an engineering major to College B, you may want to change your career and degree plans before submitting the application to that school.