



# DEMYSTIFYING THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS.

How to break  
down the  
application  
process into  
easy steps.



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# COMMON APPLICATION

## WHAT IS IT?

The Common Application (commonly called The Common App) is an admission application for undergraduate students, which allows students to explore and apply to over 1,000 member colleges.

## WHY SHOULD YOU SUBMIT IT?

The Common App simplifies the college application process by allowing students to apply to multiple schools at once, using only one application, and without having to go back and forth between numerous schools with separate requirements.

## WHAT VIRGINIA COLLEGES ACCEPT IT?

The Common App is currently accepted by 35 Virginia colleges, including: Bridgewater College, Christopher Newport University, Eastern Mennonite University, Emory & Henry University, Ferrum College, George Mason University, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampton University, Hollins University, James Madison University, Liberty University, Longwood University, Mary Baldwin University, Marymount University, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, Radford University, Randolph College, Randolph-Macon College, Regent University, Richard Bland College of William and Mary, Roanoke College, Shenandoah University, Sweet Briar College, The University of Virginia's College at Wise, University of Lynchburg, University of Mary Washington, University of Richmond, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Military Institute, Virginia Tech, Virginia Wesleyan University, Washington and Lee University, & William & Mary.

# COMMON APP PROCESS

## 1 GATHER NEEDED MATERIALS

Consider the materials needed to complete your application and compile them as soon as possible. This can include things like your high school GPA and transcript, list of activities you've participated in, academic achievements and honors, required test scores, parent information, etc.

## 2 CREATE A COMMON APP ACCOUNT ONLINE

Create a free Common App account at <https://apply.commonapp.org/createaccount>. This will allow you to get started with building a college list and filling out the basic information needed for every school.

## 3 SELECT YOUR COLLEGES

Use The College Search tab to locate the colleges to which you want to apply. Click add to add them to your application list. See our Researching and Choosing the Right College Guide to help you narrow your selections.

## 4 REACH OUT TO SUPPORTERS TO HELP WITH THE PROCESS

Reach out to your guidance counselor for help with sending your transcripts and ask close teachers, coaches, and other adults such as employers if they'll write letters of recommendation for you. Your parents may also be a source of guidance.

## 5 ORGANIZE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Each school may have different requirements for deadlines, essays, writing samples, fees (you may be eligible for fee waivers), test policies, recommender requirements, etc. Organize this information early so that you can check each item off for each school.

## 6 PLAN OUT AND DRAFT REQUIRED ESSAYS

The common app submits one personal statement to multiple schools. Read the requirements closely and follow the prompt. Plan out the essay before writing to address all of the required topics. Some schools may also require an additional writing sample.

## 7 REVIEW YOUR APPLICATION AND SUBMIT

Make sure to review your application before submitting it. Typos and simple errors can make the difference in getting accepted or not. After you have reviewed the application closely, you may pay required fees (or provided fee waivers) and submit!

## 8 NEXT STEPS

While you are waiting, stay focused on school. If your grades drop dramatically or you don't pass required classes, schools may withdraw your acceptance. Continue to keep tabs on your email and application status. Also apply to financial aid and scholarships so that you are prepared once accepted.

# College App

## CHECK LIST

- Make sure you are on the correct track to meet high school graduation requirements.
- Create a professional sounding email address to use with your applications. Use your full name or initials and last name. This should read similar to aaliyahjones@gmail.com or hurtadoma@gmail.com. Don't use emails like pl4ythegam3@gmail.com.
- Finalize the list of schools to which you plan to apply. Include: 2 reach schools, 2 match schools, and 2 safety schools. For more information, read our Researching and Choosing the Right College Guide.
- Create a Common App account and add your chosen schools. You may view their application requirements on the Common App website or check each school's website for more information.
- Take SATs/ACTs if required. This information will be listed with each school's application requirements. You may choose to take this more than once to optimize your test scores. However, the best strategy is to make sure you are prepared and rested. Take timed practice exams to help you prepare.
- On the Common App, fill out personal information such as address, contact information, and demographic information. Fill out your high school information such as your cumulative GPA. It will also require you to upload a copy of your transcript. Fill out your family information such as parent/guardian occupations and levels of education.

# College App

## CHECK LIST

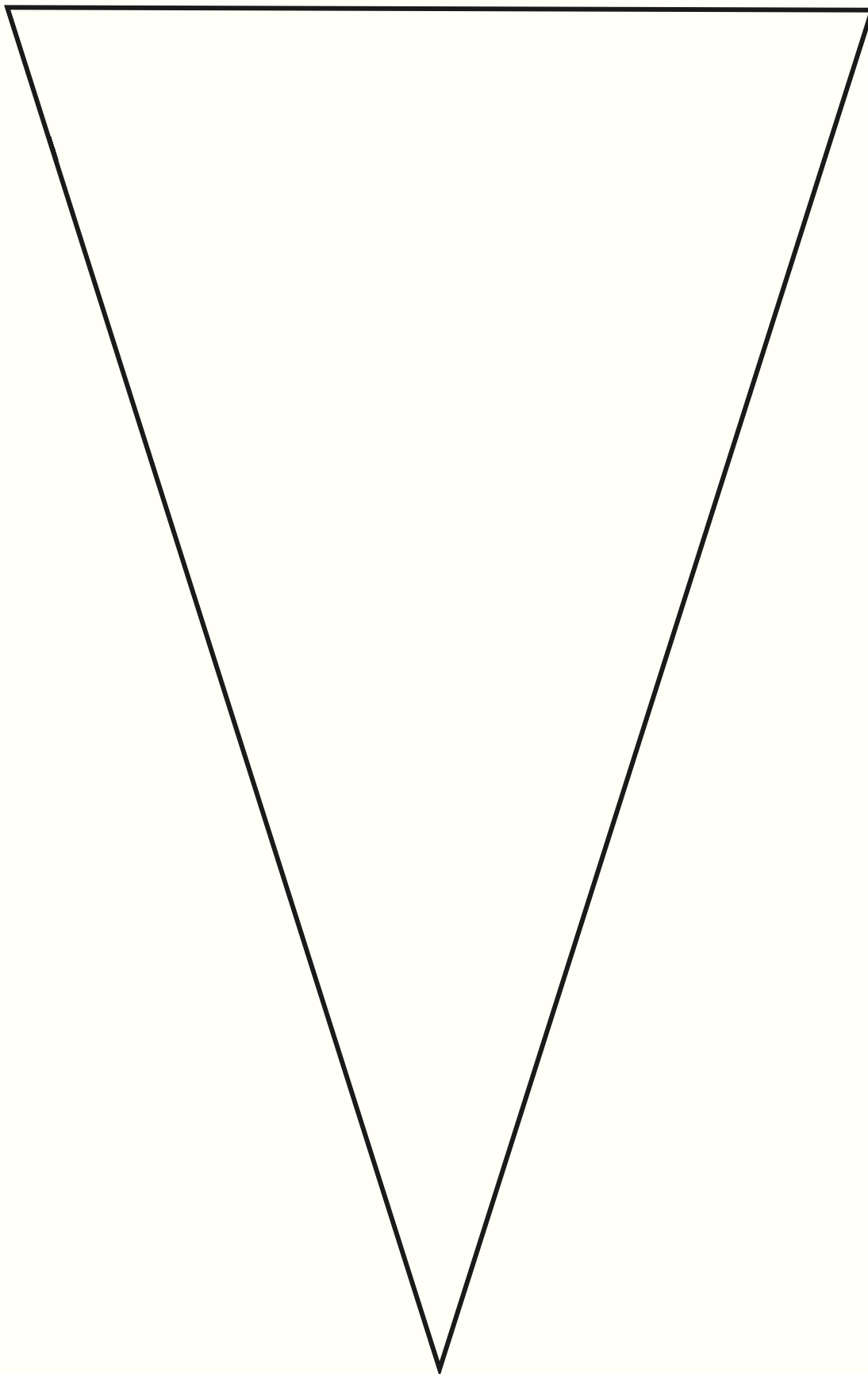
- On the Common App, fill out extracurricular information. This can include any academic honors you may have received, activities such as clubs or sports you participated in, jobs, volunteer work, and hobbies. Write a short description of the activity and your role within the activity.
- Request recommendation letters from teachers, coaches, bosses or other trusted adults who know you in an educational or professional setting . If there are specific strengths you want them to highlight mention these to them in a bulleted list and provide examples of how you have exhibited these traits. Don't request these at the last minute.
- Visit your school counseling office and inquire about their transcript sending process. Follow their directions and provide them with the required information.
- Learn the application requirements and deadlines of each school on your finalized list. Each application will have a deadline that needs to be met. Make sure you follow the guidelines and submit your application on time. There may be options for early decision or regular decision, so decide which works best for you.
- Draft your personal statement. Follow the provided prompt for your personal statement. For more information on drafting your college essay, read our Writing the College Admission Essay 101 Guide.
- Double check for any supplemental materials such as an additional college specific essay, college/major specific portfolio requirement, etc. Submit these before the deadline.
- Submit your applications on time. Review your application before submitting to double check for any errors. Make sure to confirm your submissions by checking for confirmation emails or submission receipts.

# College App

## CHECK LIST

- Monitor your Common App portal and email to check for updates such as messages from the admissions office or any flags for missing required documents.
- Focus on graduating and stay engaged with your schoolwork and extracurricular activities. Senioritis may make you feel less motivated, but colleges will review your final transcripts and can revoke admission if you have a decline in grades, so it's important to finish strong academically.
- If possible, visit/revisit your top choices. This will help demonstrate interest to the college so that they know you are genuinely serious about attending their institution. It will also help you make an informed decision about which college is the best fit for you once you are accepted.
- Fill out FAFSA and apply for financial aid and scholarships while you are waiting. You will need to consider finances when accepting admissions offers as it impacts how many student loans you may need to take out to attend the school. While program fit and other factors are important, make sure you are prepared for the cost.
- Standard deadline admissions letters should arrive in March or early April. Review your admissions offers and compare financial aid awards. Once you have made your decision, follow your admissions letter directions to commit to one school. You will need to decide by a deadline, so pay attention to these directions closely.
- Once you have submitted your acceptance, confirm your acceptance and send in your required attendance deposit (may vary by school). Send in your final transcripts. Make sure to finalize housing agreements and loans so that you are prepared to attend.

# College Pennant



**Use the blank triangle to draw your college pennant!  
Now is the time to get excited!**