



SCHOOL COUNSELING OFFICE - Senior Snapshot

How to Submit College Applications

If you haven't already, we recommend reading our office's other *Senior Snapshot*, ***A Framework for Thinking about College Applications***, in addition to reading these instructions.

The different elements of a typical college application are outlined below, roughly in the order that we recommend you complete them. Please **read carefully** through this sheet. For each application you plan to submit, you should also pay close attention to the specific instructions provided by the college.

First Steps in the Application Process

Login to Naviance

Naviance is the portal you and your counselor will use to organize and submit college application materials.

- Add college names to the *Colleges I'm Applying To* section. Add all the schools where you plan to apply, whether it will be by electronic or paper application. By entering the college names, you initiate the process that will allow your counselor to send your transcript and other materials. If you don't add a college to this section, your counselor can't send materials on your behalf – whether electronically or by paper.
- Make a note of the early and regular application deadlines for each of your colleges.
- Fill out the **"FERPA" waiver of access form** in the xxx section. By agreeing to this statement, you waive the right to view the letters of recommendation that your counselor and teachers write on your behalf. Colleges consider the signed FERPA form to be very significant; your signature means that the people writing your recommendation letters are doing so confidentially, and are therefore more likely to give an honest assessment.

Register for the Common Application - click the link in Naviance or go to commonapp.org

You will fill out the Common App for any colleges that accept it, but be aware that some schools, including Penn State and XXXXX, do not accept it.

Think of **Naviance as a portal** your counselor will use to monitor your applications and organize sending transcripts, etc. Think of the **Common App website as the way to access the application forms** for the various colleges on your list.

- Set up a user name and password.
- Be sure to use exactly the same first, middle and last name (e.g. your full middle name or an initial) on Naviance and the Common App, to be sure all your college materials are connected properly.
- Set up an application for each of the schools on your list in the *My Colleges* tab.
- Verify each college's early and regular application deadlines that you already noted in Naviance. Note that some institutions have a deadline for supplemental materials (such as an arts or athletic supplement) that is **earlier** than the deadline for the full application.
- Read through other Common App instructions carefully to get an idea of how the online process works. There are helpful sections about each element of the application. It's a good idea to have a parent/guardian review the Instructions page with you. [Becky – is this good advice? Or should we say that we do things differently from the Common App instructions, because of Naviance?]

If relevant: Research application procedures for colleges not accepting the Common App

Many colleges accept and use the Common App, but many others do not. If you're applying to a school that does not accept the Common App, spend some time of the college's website to be sure you understand the process. Talk with your counselor if you're not sure what to do.

Submit your test scores

Submit SAT, ACT and/or SAT II test scores to each college on your list by visiting the *collegeboard.com* website. Test scores are submitted separately from Naviance and the Common App.

Decide whether to apply early to one of your colleges

Read and think carefully about Early Decision, which becomes a binding commitment if you are accepted, and Early Action, which is not binding. We discourage you from applying Early Decision to a college unless the school is one you know well; it is your strong favorite and has been for some time; and you are willing to forego having a choice of college options next April.

Special considerations

You may need to follow special instructions if applying for programs in art, music, or theater, which might require an audition or a portfolio. If you plan to play sports in college, you may need to visit the NCAA Eligibility Center website. Talk to your counselor if you have questions.

Getting the Help You Need from Others

Visit the Counseling Office

- Fill out a hard-copy **transcript request** form for each of your colleges. Note that both you and a parent/guardian need to sign each form.
- If you haven't already done so, be sure to review your transcript carefully in Power School, to be sure it is accurate.
- If you haven't already done so, **schedule an appointment to talk with your counselor** about your college applications [Becky – is this right?]
- Note the **Counseling Office's deadlines!** The Counseling Office needs 15 working days (three weeks) to process transcript requests. For Early Action or Early Decision applications (generally due around November 1), you should plan to submit your transcript request before or during the first week of October. If you are applying for a January 1 deadline, you'll need to turn in your transcript form three weeks before winter break begins, around **November 30**. A good plan is to submit all transcript requests by Thanksgiving break.

Visit the people writing your letters of recommendation

Most colleges require two letters of recommendation from academic teachers, but will accept an extra, third letter from a non-academic source (a coach, employer, or other adult who knows you well).

- Talk with your two teachers about how they plan to submit your letters, either electronically through Naviance, or by hard copy.
- For **electronic letters**, send the teachers an email invitation through Naviance. Once you've confirmed that your teachers received the invitation, they will be able to submit your letters online. [Is this right?]

- For **paper letters**, which will include any non-academic letter you may have requested as an extra, provide an organized set of materials to the letter writer, in a large manila envelope labeled with both your name and the teacher's. For each college, include a recommendation form printed from the Common App, and a stamped envelope (one first-class stamp is usually enough) addressed to each college admissions office, with Harriton or Lower Merion High School as the return address. As an example, if you're applying to X number of schools, for each person submitting paper letters on your behalf, you will provide:
 - a large manila envelope labeled with your name and the teacher's name
 - X stamped envelopes, each addressed to one of your colleges (as an added precaution, write your name on the inside flap of each envelope, in case it gets separated from your other materials)
 - X recommendation forms printed from the Common App (with your pre-printed name and ID number, and then each college's name hand-written at the top)
 - a one-page summary sheet for your teacher, listing your name along with the name and deadline for each college you're applying to [Not sure this is all correct?]

Filling out Your Applications

Fill out the Common Application or other online or paper applications

This is the heart of the process and will take some time.

- Fill out the general information.
- Write the required essays. Plan out the topic and content for each, write rough drafts, and leave yourself plenty of time to edit and proofread them. You will want to write several drafts of each essay, and should consider showing them to two adults to get some feedback. Be careful, however, that your voice comes through. This essay should be written from your teenage perspective, and too much editing by adults can take away the authenticity of your writing. Good grammar and careful proofreading are important, but make sure your thoughts and viewpoint still come through. Use the essays to write honestly about yourself: your personality traits, people or things that are important to you, the experiences that have shaped who you are.
- Attach a resume if you feel it provides additional information that is relevant to your application.
- Be sure to attach or send separately any art, music or other supplements as specified by the college.

Application fees

Be aware that many colleges charge application fees, usually ranging from \$35 to \$100. If the fees present a financial burden, talk to your counselor. [not sure on this section??]

Financial Aid

Like test score submissions, financial aid is an element of the college application that is handled separately. The best place to start when applying for financial aid is the website for each college you're interested in. Together with your parent/guardian, you will fill out a form called the "FAFSA" and other forms such as "PROFILE" and/or specific college and state aid forms. Talk to your counselor if you need assistance, and watch for the school district's evening presentation on financial aid. [not sure on this?]

Sign and send!

- As the deadline nears for each college, check Naviance to see that your transcripts and recommendation letters have been sent.
- Carefully proof-read your full application.

Do **not** wait until the last minute to hit “send” on the Common App! Don’t let your application miss the deadline because of a power outage, a computer freeze, or some other catastrophe. These deadlines are important and there’s no reason to cut it close.

Confirm receipt

- Verify through Naviance that your application was received.

A Final Comment

Each year, there are some glitches in this process – students, counselors and admissions officers are all human, and mistakes will happen. But counselors and admissions officers are used to sorting through problems. Your obligation as the student is to submit **your** materials, **complete and on time** and then verify through Naviance that your entire application (including test scores, recommendation letters and transcripts) has been received. If you have any questions, stop in to see your counselor. We’re here to help!

A FEW GOOD RESOURCES

College Admission: From Application to Acceptance, Step by Step, Robin Mamlet & Christine VanDeVelde

bigfuture.collegeboard.org good checklists, videos,
thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com
petersons.com

unigo.com
collegeprowler.com
collegeconfidential.com