

Frequently Asked Questions about Applying to College

1. How can I give myself the best advantage in the college application process?

A student gains the biggest advantage by **applying early** (August or September), by doing an excellent job on the application and essays, and by doing the optional things if he is a review candidate. Because the work for the application can take 15-20 hours, starting early is recommended. *In addition, be sure to research the admissions requirements of your college choices.*

2. How do I apply?

Most Texas colleges and universities have students apply online through ApplyTexas at www.applytexas.org. Students may set up an account any time during their junior or senior year of high school. Some schools allow you to apply for scholarships along with your admissions application. Any required essays can be pasted onto the application also. Once you have completed one application, the information may be copied over to other school applications. Some private and out-of-state schools prefer you to apply online at their websites. Some out-of-state colleges want students to use the Common Application at www.commonapp.org.

3. How do colleges decide on which applicants to accept?

All Texas colleges and universities must automatically accept students ranking in the top 10% of their graduating class. UT has an exception and will accept the top 8%. Many universities also have an SAT or ACT score for which they consider students as qualified for automatic acceptance. That score varies from school to school. All other applicants go through a review process and the universities take a holistic look at the student in making the admission decision.

4. Why does MCA not rank its students?

Most private high schools do not rank. It is MCA's goal that students achieve a set standard, and not have their performances judged by comparison to others. Therefore, most MCA students will be review candidates unless their test scores qualify for automatic acceptance.

5. What do the colleges and universities consider in the review process?

- SAT or ACT scores sent from the test center
 - Grades - official school transcript
 - Information on the college application and extra documentation you may send in:
 - Extra-Curricular Activities
 - Leadership
 - Service
 - Awards
 - Jobs or summer activities
- Optional things like academic resume, letters of recommendation, optional essays, copies of award certificates, news articles and any other important information you would like them to know.

6. Do MCA graduates get into the colleges of their choice?

Most graduates get into their first or second choice college or university. Of course some colleges are more selective than others and students must meet the requirements set by those schools. See the recommended timeline for applying to selective colleges. The MCA School Profile has a list of schools to which MCA graduates have been accepted.

7. Which test should I take, the SAT or ACT?

Take both at least once. When you determine which one you are better at, continue taking that test. Most colleges will accept either test, and they will only consider your highest combined score. Research the requirements for your chosen schools to make sure. All colleges and universities require incoming freshmen to take one of them. Your scores must be sent from the test center. However, many schools do not require transfer sophomores or juniors to take these tests.

Note: many students find their test scores increase the more they take the test. Reviewing algebra may help improve SAT math scores. Algebra II is the highest math covered on the SAT.

8. How do I sign up for the SAT or ACT.

Each student must register online for either of the tests. You will create an account and select colleges to receive the scores. The SAT website is www.collegeboard.com. The ACT website is www.actstudent.org. You will also select a test site. Midland College and Odessa College are the closest test sites. These websites also have sample test questions everyday. Students can gain an advantage in understanding the directions, the style of questions and comfort with the test taking process by taking time to answer these questions often.

9. When should I start taking these tests?

Students should start taking the tests during the junior year and continue into the fall of their senior year. Take the test as many times as feasible.

10. If I can't start the application until August or September, how can I start early?

Students can update their MCA transcript at the end of their junior year. Similarly, they can create an academic resume during their junior year or the summer between the junior and senior years. By creating a thorough resume of their activities, service, awards and work experiences, they will be ready ahead of time to fill out the application when it is available. Students may call the colleges for the essay topics and have these written by the end of the summer. In addition, by asking for and getting letters of recommendation in the summer, a student would have everything necessary to fill out and submit the application soon after it is up.

11. Do I really need to make a formal resume?

If you are going to be a review candidate, it is highly recommended. Creating the resume allows you to prioritize your activities in order of importance. You will have thought this out ahead of time and you will be able to fill out the application more quickly and well. On a resume you can go into much more detail of exactly what you did in your activities. The application allows only for a limited number of activities described in limited space. You do not have these constraints with the resume. You may have more activities than will fit on the

application. You should list these on the resume. Colleges will use the resume to garner more information about you. Sending in a resume can only help you. See the resume form.

12. What should I know about the parts of the application?

Activities: List activities in order of importance. Include the time spent doing the activity (hrs/wk and wks/yr) including practicing, traveling and competing. Any activities at school or in the community during grades 9-12 may be included. For service activities, calculate the total time spent serving. Some common MCA activities are sports, American History Trip, etiquette club, High School Retreat, Mentor groups, Adventure Club, etc.

Awards: List awards received from grades 9-12. Indicate the number of people to receive the award if it helps you, ie., Student Commendation Award, 1 or 3, award given to outstanding students who exemplify a love of learning and high academic standards. Some other possible awards are Master with Honor in ____, School Service Award, Character Award, Honor Roll, Honor Graduate, etc. Any awards received outside of school should be given also. These might include Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, summer camp awards, community awards, theater, etc.

Essays: ApplyTexas.org shows what essays are required by which Texas colleges. When writing your essays, make sure you answer the question. Essays may be pasted onto the application. If you are a review candidate, it is recommended you do the optional essays.

Scholarship Application: Many Texas universities have a scholarship application as part of the admissions application on ApplyTexas.

Other colleges: Once you complete one application on ApplyTexas, you may copy the information over to another application by going to your account. Most of the information will be prefilled, but you must save each page of the new application. You will also have to paste in your essays again for each application.

13. When should I visit colleges I am interested in?

Visiting colleges is a good way to help students narrow down their choices of major and what school to attend. Visiting before you start applying, simplifies the process and gives you a goal to work towards. The junior year seems to be the ideal time to do this.

14. After I submit my application, what else should I do?

Have MCA mail in these documents:

- An official high school transcript
- A school profile
- Certification of Recommended High School Curriculum

You may mail in these optional documents:

- Academic resume
- Letters of recommendation (2)
- Any other documentation you would like to send.

The schools to which you have applied will give you a website to check your progress. Check it often.

15. Once I have been accepted to a college, is there anything else I should know?

Yes, if you plan to live in a dorm on campus, most schools require that you take the bacterial meningitis vaccination before you can receive a dorm assignment.

There is also a Texas Success Initiative requirement to satisfy. The Texas Legislature has required colleges to determine that students are ready for college classes before they register. Students are required to take the THEA or COMPASS tests to show readiness in reading and math. These tests may be taken at Midland College before you go to your college's orientation. *Students who make the following scores are **exempt** from these extra tests:*

	ACT	SAT
Composite/Combined	23	1070
Critical Reading	19	500
Math	19	500

16. Where can I look for scholarship applications:

Try these websites:

www.pbaf.org

www.fastweb.com

www.Absolutelyscholarships.com

www.collegnet.com

www.scholarships.com

The Junior League of Midland also offers a scholarship clearinghouse. Some companies offer scholarships for their employees' children.