

CMS College Application Process

It takes more than a form to apply for college. When the college receives the first piece of information about you, they will start your file. This can be an ACT score you sent to the college. When your file is complete with all supporting documents and test scores, the college admissions office will evaluate your qualifications. Colleges each have their own criteria for admission, but the main factors at which they look are GPA, the courses you chose and their difficulty level, test scores, essays, recommendations, quality and depth of commitment to pursuits outside the classroom and to summer activities.

Be Organized:

Use a spreadsheet, table or planner to keep track of college deadlines. Every school will have a deadline for early admission, regular admission, scholarships and honors colleges. Create your list of schools that you want to apply to this summer, then plug in the deadlines to your spreadsheet. You can add to it as you go if you discover other scholarships that you want to apply for.

Early Decision and Early Action:

Early Decision is a binding agreement, if you apply to a school Early Decision and the school admits you then you must withdrawal all other applications to attend that school. This must be your first choice school. You will receive your admission decision by December. Early Action is simply applying early to receive a decision by January or February. It is not binding.

College Visits:

Register for tours through the university. Make a list of questions and things that are important to you to ask on the tour. Then make a comparison of all the schools you visit so you can narrow down to the schools you want to apply to.

Applications:

Applications are online and available August 1st. Application requirements vary by school. Look at applications this summer so you will know if you need recommendations, essays, resume, etc. You can begin working on that in the summer so you will be ready in the fall. Once you have submitted an application, immediately see your counselor to request a transcript to be sent to the school. They will not process your application without it.

Recommendations:

Submit a resume at least a week in advance to a teacher or counselor that you need a recommendation for an application. If the school wants the recommender to submit it electronically like the Common App, you will need to also input the recommender's email address.

Checklist for Letters of Recommendation

There is a difference between a counselor recommendation and a teacher recommendation. Counselors write about you as a whole student (your transcript, awards, community service, leadership, and extracurricular activities). Teachers write specifically about you as a student in their class (participation, work ethic, academic ability, and attitude). Your counselor will write a letter of recommendation for you, but you often may be asked to choose two teachers to write recommendation letters as well. Knowing this, you should:

- ✓ Make a list of the schools you are applying to and include the area of study (if you know) you are interested in majoring.
- ✓ Include the due dates for each school and whether you are applying early decision, early action or regular decision.
- ✓ Prepare a one page resume. Your 12th grade English teacher will provide a template that will be assigned in August when you begin your senior year. This will be part of your grade.
- ✓ After your resume is written and when you are ready to begin the application process, ask your counselor and teachers in a timely manner if they would be willing to write you a recommendation letter. Provide them with a copy of your finished resume.
- ✓ If your college or scholarship application is specific about selecting teachers in certain curriculum areas, be sure you follow directions.
- ✓ Important: Pay close attention to due dates. Don't wait until the last minute and expect a professional recommendation letter. It may take several hours to write an awesome letter of recommendation.
- ✓ Be sure to follow up with thanking teachers and counselors for writing your letters.

2018-2019 Common Application Essay Prompts

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

The most popular essay prompt of the 2017-2018 application year (through January 5, 2018) is "Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth..." (23.6%), followed by the topic of your choice option (22.5%), and "Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful..." (21.4%).

"Through the Common App essay prompts, we want to give all applicants - regardless of background or access to counseling - the opportunity to share their voice with colleges. Every applicant has a unique story. The essay helps bring that story to life," said Meredith Lombardi, Associate Director, Outreach and Education, for The Common Application.