

Quick Guide: The Anatomy of the College Application

The pieces of your college application add up to give admission officers an idea of who you are. Not every college requires every one of these elements — for example, some colleges don't ask for admission test scores — but this list shows the most-common requirements. Be sure to find out from your school counselor or principal which of these items you have to send and which items your high school will send.



Application Forms

To fill in all the blanks on the application form itself, you may have to dig up documents or get answers from your parents. Most students use online applications, but paper applications are usually available too. There are also services that let you complete one application online and submit it to several colleges.

Application Fees

College application fees vary, but generally it costs from \$35 to \$85 to apply to each college. Fees are nonrefundable. Many colleges offer fee waivers (that is, they don't require the fee) to students who can't afford to pay. If you need application fee waivers, speak with your college counselor or principal.



Your High School Transcript



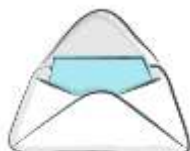
The record of the classes you've taken, and your grades is one of the most important parts of your application. Your high school should send your transcript, along with a school profile, directly to the colleges you are applying to. Ask your counselor or principal how to arrange for this. And be sure to check the transcript for errors before it's sent.

Admission Test Scores

Some colleges require or recommend that you send scores from tests such as the SAT or ACT. Colleges accept scores only from the testing organizations themselves. Visit the testing organization's website for more information. And learn more about the role of testing in college admission.



Letters of Recommendation



Many colleges require letters of recommendation from teachers or other adults who know you well. Ask your references well in advance of the deadlines to write you a recommendation. You may want to give them a short-written summary of your achievements to help them write about you.

Essays

Your essays are a chance for you to give admission officers a better idea of your character and strengths. Remember to proofread your essays carefully before you send them in.



Auditions and Portfolios



If you're applying to music, art or theater programs, the colleges may want to see samples of your work. This means you may need to audition or send portfolios or videos showing your artistic ability as part of your application.

Interviews

It's a good idea to ask for an interview, even if it's not required. It shows you're serious and gives you a chance to connect with someone in the admission office. Even if a college is far away, you may be able to interview with a local alumnus. Read [What to Do Before and After Your College Interview](#) to prepare.



Final Transcript



At the end of your senior year, your high school will send a final transcript to the college you've decided to attend. This shows your college what classes you took and whether you kept your grades up during your last year in high school.