

Here are some Common Application Tips and Essay Prompts....

The website is commonapp.org. Set up your username and password and WRITE IT DOWN! You can access it before August 1, however, everything will go down and up again August 1, so anything you put in the Common App may be lost (save your work).

There is a list of schools that accept the Common App on the website. Any schools that accept them, you should apply that way. Many schools on Common App also have a supplement, so you will fill out the generic application that all of your selected schools see and then a supplement (additional application) for each individual school you selected – this can all be done on the commonapp.org website. You can send the application to as many schools as you want by selecting the schools on the application. The cost is determined by the individual schools. If you are eligible for a fee waiver, your applications will be waived for those schools that accept waivers.

If you do not qualify for a waiver, you should pay early if you know you are positive you're going to apply because you won't be able to check your status online at that school (in order to verify that they've received all the necessary materials).

It doesn't matter if you want to start with the generic application first or the supplements to the individual schools. You can move freely between both, so you can do generic and then one supplement at a time (which I would suggest) or you can do all your supplements first and then the generic. Don't submit anything until you're positive it's how you want yourself reflected because once you submit either the generic or the supplement, you cannot go back and change any part of it. Keep in mind that you may be expecting awards around the beginning of the school year, your schedule may change, you may be elected to a new officer position, etc., so you'll want to wait to add these things to your application – however, if there is a change (award, extracurricular, etc.), you can email the regional advisors of the schools to which you're applying with the updated information and they will add it to your file. I would encourage you to type up everything in a word document first so that you can cut and paste it into the common app because if you realize you want to change the order in which you listed your awards for example, you'll have to start all over to re-order. Saving info in a word document is a great back up. Once you have added the information into the fields, you are going to want to constantly preview it to make sure it fits (they are looking for a very specific word count and even though it may seem like everything you typed "fits in the box" when you preview it you'll realize often times your words are cut off). All of your activities, accomplishments and awards should be listed in order of importance.

Towards the end, it will prompt you to email me a request for a recommendation. You should have that sent to your Guidance Counselor.

Instructions. The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores? Choose the option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. Use the full range if you need it, but don't feel obligated to do so. (The application won't accept a response shorter than 250 words.)

2020-2021 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.