

Get Accepted Guide



**A High School Student's Guide to
Applying to College & Getting Accepted**



What is the Get Accepted Guide?

There’s a lot of advice out there about getting into college and it can be confusing. You may feel like you have to be a straight A student or have endless time for sports, clubs, and volunteering. We’re here to tell you that **you can put together an amazing college application right now!**

A great application requires you to **be vulnerable** and to **share your life experiences**.

If you can do those two things, all while following the directions of your college application, you can be an impressive candidate for your school. And we’re here for you every step of the way!

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About Get Schooled

Get Schooled is a national nonprofit organization here to support young people get to college, find first jobs, and succeed in both. We share free content on getschooled.com and social media and we provide personalized support through text message. We’re here to help you reach your education and career goals and we’re rooting for you! [Learn more at GetSchooled.com](https://getschooled.com).



The Basics

**What &
Where &
When &
How to Apply**

WHAT

First step: Save a copy of our [college application requirements tracker](#).

Submitted by you

This is a list of information and documents that you will need to provide within the application to ensure it is complete.

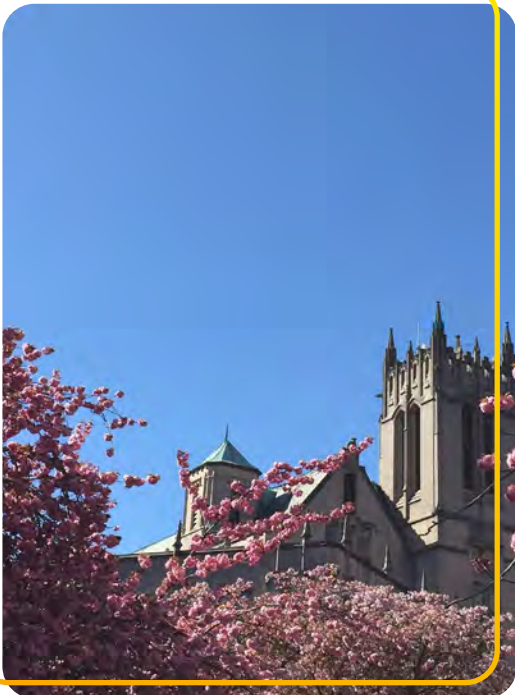
- Extracurricular activities
- Essay, personal statement, or other writing samples
- Transcript
- Honors & awards
- Resume (if necessary)
- Test scores (if necessary)
- Application fee or fee waiver

Submitted by Others

This information needs to be submitted by someone besides you, although **it is your responsibility to officially request it**. Often these are listed as “official” documents and need to come from the source (institution, high school, educator, etc).

- Official SAT/ACT test scores (if necessary, sent directly by SAT/ACT to college)
- Official high school transcript (after graduation, sent by your high school)
- Letter of recommendation (if necessary)

**Text #Hello to 33-55-77
to get support straight
to your phone!**



WHERE

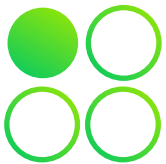
After you research your college options and narrow down your list of schools you plan to apply to, you can organize them into 3 categories:

- **Reach Schools** are the ones you dream of going to, but are a bit more competitive to get into, due to things like small acceptance rates, minimum GPAs or test scores, or even high costs of tuition.
- **Target Schools** are schools you have a strong chance of getting admitted to. Your test scores, GPA, or coursework typically match those of other incoming students at these schools.
- **Match Schools** are schools you feel confident about getting accepted to, even if they're not necessarily at the very top of your list.

You can evaluate this list based on the kind of experience you want to have in college, the size and location of the school, and of course, the academic programs available at each. **We recommend applying to at least one school that fits into each of these categories, so you have options to choose from.**

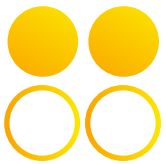
WHEN

There are the [4 common college application deadlines](#):



Early Decision (ED)

Allows you to apply to college earlier than most students (in November). Applicants receive their decisions by December. Applications are binding, meaning if you get accepted to a school you applied to through ED, you must attend it. This is a great option for students who are certain they match the admissions criteria of a specific school.



Early Action (EA)

Similarly allows you to apply to college early (in November) but you won't receive a decision until January or February. Students applying through EA have until May 1 to commit to a college. Applications are not binding. This is a great option for students who want to submit their applications early and have more time to weigh their college options.



Regular Decision

Deadlines are anywhere from November - February. Colleges send their decisions out around March or April, and students have until May 1st to commit to their school of choice. Majority of students applying to college submit their applications under regular decision deadlines.



Rolling Admissions

Allows students to submit their applications without a strict deadline. Schools with rolling admissions accept applications until the spots in their incoming class fill up, rather than giving a particular deadline. This is a great option for students who need extra time to get their application materials together or decide to apply to college later in the year.



HOW

You can apply to several colleges at the same time using the applications below or apply directly to your college of choice via their website. The undergraduate admissions website of the college will indicate what platform to use to apply:

- **Common App:** One application to apply to over 900 colleges worldwide.
- **Common Black College App:** Apply to 67 HBCUs with one application and a \$20 fee.
- **Coalition for College Scoir Application:** Apply to over 150 distinguished and diverse public and private colleges and universities.
- **Individual college admissions websites:** Apply individually to colleges and universities.

More tips for applying:

- [College application fee waivers](#)
- [Making your college application stand out](#)

Personal Essay

There are many components that make up a college application and the essay is an important element. A college essay is a chance to tell your story in ways that your resume or test scores can't. This is an opportunity to really go deep. ***What's your story? What are you passionate about? How have your experiences shaped you into who you are today? Who do you want to become in college and beyond?*** An effective college essay will answer these questions and help the person reading it get to know you on a more personal level.

Every student's essay will be different - that's the point! Your essay should be unique to YOU. While there's no such thing as a "perfect" college essay, there are [a few things you can do](#) to make sure yours is as well-written, honest, and authentic as possible.



Choose a prompt that interests you.

Be sure to respond specifically to the prompts. Choose a prompt that will help you tell your story in the best and most effective way. No matter what prompt you choose, make sure you fully respond to the prompt in your essay. Here's a [list of common topics](#).



Follow a 5-paragraph essay structure.

Make an [outline for your essay](#) and be sure to include an introduction that states the main topic or theme of your essay, three body paragraphs to explore and break down the topic or theme, and a conclusion paragraph that summarizes what you just wrote about and shares your hopes for the future.



Have someone review your essay.

Before you submit your essay, be sure to have someone else proofread it for you. They can check spelling and grammar, give feedback on how well your essay answered the prompt, help you strengthen the main theme of your essay and more. We're here to help! [Submit your essay to us](#) for a free professional review. We'll send you actionable feedback within a week.



Know and avoid the myths of college application essays.

Your college essay doesn't need to be a masterpiece, you don't need an incredible life story to write an interesting essay, and you don't need to share everything you've ever accomplished in your essay. Learn why these [common college essay myths](#) are just myths.

We'll review your essay for
FREE!

Submit Here



Extracurriculars

There are many reasons to participate in activities outside of school. Apart from gaining practical life skills, building relationships, and participating in something that brings you joy, this is a great way to show colleges a little about who you are as a person and what you will bring to their campus. They are also a great way of showing that you've taken steps to reach your educational and career goals.

Extracurriculars can include school leadership, sports, volunteering, and so much more. Think about this as anything you do outside of school. [Check out activities to boost your college application.](#)

This can look like:

Taking care of others

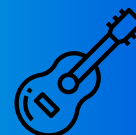
Don't overlook service within your families as volunteer work - it definitely counts! You're keeping them safe, helping with homework, cooking dinner or maybe even getting them to and from sports practices or evening classes. This is a huge responsibility for a teenager and shows your dedication to your family, but also your ability to multitask, plan and organize. Those three skills are essential to your success in college and will appeal to admission teams. Whether it's your siblings, cousins, grandparents or neighbors, caretaking shows maturity that will stand out in your application.

Political campaigns

Election season can happen 2-3 times a year in any given city or state. Someone is always campaigning for local and state level positions. See what elections are coming up in your area, find a candidate you want to support and [volunteer your time](#). That can include canvassing, talking with neighbors about the candidate, or designing social media ads to promote them.

Helping with community events

A community event could be something hosted at a local business, your YMCA or at a place of worship with an effort of bringing the community together to network, celebrate, bond and build relationships. Colleges value students who are deeply rooted in their communities.



But, who has time...

Other responsibilities may prevent you from participating in extracurriculars or activities in person, but there are a ton of volunteer opportunities that can be done remotely! Check out these [virtual volunteer opportunities](#) you can participate in to boost your application.



Awards & Honors

[Accolades](#) are ways that you might have been honored for your work. This could be anything from making the honor roll to being voted class secretary. Accolades don't just happen in school, but in your community service and extracurriculars as well. Accolades are anytime someone says "You did well" and honors it. These recognitions show colleges two things: you are working hard in something and your peers and the adults around you respect it.

Accolades are a way your community can recommend you without writing a letter. Be sure to write about these awards and accolades in your application and include any supplemental materials with them, such as newspaper clippings, web articles, etc. Colleges love to see all of this! Add your honors to your application so schools can see that you're a valuable candidate that people have already recognized as great.

How awards translate:

Varsity Letter = Great Leadership Skills

HS Club Member = You Enjoy Building Community

Student of the Month = Dedication to Academics

Transcript

Your transcript is an official record of all your coursework and grades and is essential when applying to any school. This tells colleges both how you performed in these subjects and what classes you may be ready for in college. Your transcript can also show how you might be challenging yourself, highlighting AP, IB, and dual-credit classes as well as other challenging courses that give them an idea of your interests and goals. Think of your transcript like one piece of your education story.

There are two kinds of transcripts: **official and unofficial**. An official transcript is sent directly from your high school to the college. You can download and send your unofficial transcript. Be sure to note which kind your application requires.

If you're using the [Common App](#), you can "Invite a Counselor" in your application using their email address so they can submit your official transcript and other things needed for the application. If you have completed (or are working on) any college courses through dual enrollment or other programs, you will need to submit a transcript from your current high school as well as your college.



Test Scores



In the past, SAT/ACT scores were a crucial component of applying to college. Many colleges and universities even had minimum score requirements on tests like the SAT or ACT to be considered for admission. However, many schools [no longer require](#) or even accept them.

There's no right answer as to whether or not you should submit your test scores. Check the requirements of each school you're applying to and decide if it's right for your situation. What ultimately matters most is that your application is thorough and includes all the required components, is inclusive of all your relevant experience, and is true to yourself.

Regardless of where you apply, it's important to know how to [send your SAT and/or ACT scores](#). Be sure to also request fee waivers if you're eligible ([SAT](#) & [ACT](#)).

Letters of Recommendation

You may be asked to provide [letters of recommendation](#) as a part of your applications. Letters of recommendation are used by admissions to get a better understanding of you and hear from someone about qualities you possess, gain more insight on who you are as a student, and what you contribute to your school or community.

Before you ask someone to write a letter of recommendation, ask yourself these questions:

- Does this person **know me well enough** to write a thoughtful & personal recommendation?
- Will this person write a **positive recommendation**?
- Have I given this person **enough time to write** a recommendation?
- **Why** do I want to ask this particular person?

Common people to ask for a letter of recommendation are teachers, counselors, school administrators, coaches, club advisors, job supervisors, or mentors.

People are very busy so preparation in asking for letters of recommendation is key! Make sure you follow these tips when asking for a letter:

1

Make a [brag sheet](#).

If there are particular things you want the recommender to focus on, let them know! Create a brag sheet so that they know other areas of who you are. This will also save them time and help your application look cohesive, which will be appreciated. Sometimes a recommender may ask for a copy of your personal statement essay or a resume.

2

Allow plenty of time for your recommender to write a letter.

Organize your deadlines and make sure you give plenty of notice (at least a month if possible). Asking last minute can result in a rushed and less thoughtful letter or your recommender flat out saying no.

3

Provide clear instructions to the recommender on how it will be submitted.

Most recommendations are submitted online through a portal or via email. Let them know how they will receive the information so they know how to submit when the time comes.

4

Send reminders.

Ask your recommender if they would like you to remind them as the submission date approaches and plan accordingly. If they say yes, make sure you put it in your calendar so you don't forget to send them a reminder.

5

Send a thank you note.

Saying thank you is a super important (and often forgotten) step when receiving a letter of recommendation. Be sure to reach out to your recommender - either in person, via email, or through a written note - to thank them for their time and effort in writing you a letter of recommendation.

While you wait to hear back...

Keep your senior year momentum going.

Even after your applications are sent off, it's essential to [stay on top of your grades and keep your academic momentum going!](#) Your performance during your second semester can affect your status and/or acceptance to schools, since your school or counselor will submit your official transcript at the end of your senior year. Also, any financial aid you've been awarded (such as scholarships), may have minimum GPA requirements students need to meet to qualify.

Some students may feel overwhelmed, burnt out, or even a bit unmotivated after sending their college applications off, which is totally normal. College application season is a highly stressful time for many students, so now that your applications are complete, it could be a great time to practice some [self-care](#). Whether it's hitting the gym or playing your favorite instrument, be sure to take some time for yourself to recharge and do things you enjoy. This can help you stay focused and motivated to finish the school year off strong!

Check your email and mail regularly.

Be sure to [check your email and mailbox regularly](#), since the majority of colleges will send their decisions in either of these ways. They may also reach out if your application is incomplete or even request additional information, such as a letter of recommendation, to get to know you better as they are reviewing your application. If you receive any requests like this, it's important to respond **ASAP** with the material you're being asked for. We recommend checking both your mail and email once a day to ensure you don't miss anything important from the schools you applied to.

Apply for scholarships.

There are millions - yes, millions - of dollars out there right now in scholarships! But knowing where and how to find them is key. Check out some of our scholarship resources that help students find money to fund their college education:

- Our guide on [how to effectively find scholarships](#) to start your search.
- Our regularly-updated [scholarship lists](#), broken down \$\$\$ amount, identity, and more.
- [Free scholarship alerts](#) sent to your email every other week.
- [Scholarship application requirements tracker](#) (Google Doc and Google Sheet) to help you stay organized.

You Belong in College!

Applying to college takes time, preparation, and persistence. If you find yourself struggling or are doubting your place in college, check out these [stories from students](#) who've overcome challenges they've faced applying to and persisting through college. No matter your grades, test scores, or background, [you belong in college!](#)



Have any questions or need some support as you navigate college applications?

Get Schooled's team of advisors are here to help! Text us with your questions and we'll guide you through the process.

