

HIGH SCHOOL Academic Bulletin

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Letters of Recommendation How to Stand Out From the Crowd

Most college applications request two or three recommendation letters from people who know you in and out of the classroom.

Whom should I ask?

Read the application carefully. Often colleges request letters of recommendation from an academic teacher (sometimes a specific discipline), your school counselor, or both. If a non-specified academic teacher is requested, your English or math teachers usually make good candidates. Also, you should use a teacher from junior year, or a current teacher if he/she has known you long enough to form an opinion. It is best not to go back too far, as colleges want current perspectives on their potential candidates. All the better if you get a recommendation from a teacher who's also been involved with you outside the classroom, but unless a college specifically requests it, don't use a coach or someone who can't speak to your academic achievements and potential.

When should I ask?

Make sure to give your recommendation writers plenty of time — at least two weeks before letters are due — to complete and send your recommendations, but as with anything, the earlier the better. Many teachers like to have the summer to write recommendations, so if you asked last spring, you're doing great. If you apply under early decision or early action plans, you'll need to ask at the start of the school year, if you didn't request one last spring.

How can I get the best possible recommendations?

Talk to your recommendation writers. For teachers, it's important that they focus on your academic talents and accomplishments within their classroom, because that's what colleges are looking for in teacher recommendations. Talk to them about what you remember about their classes and your participation in it. Then highlight a particular incident, paper, or anything else that might help them provide anecdotal information and specific examples of your achievement rather than just vague praise.

It's also important that you spend time talking with your counselor and ensure he/she knows about your plans, accomplishments, and involvements. You may want to provide him/her with a brief resume of your activities and goals; a resume can provide the best overview of your high school involvement and contributions. Also, if there is some aspect of your transcript that needs explaining — perhaps low grades during sophomore year — it's helpful to talk with your counselor to explain why and how you've changed and improved.

Helpful Tips

- Don't be shy. Teachers and counselors are usually happy to help you, as long as you respect their time constraints.
- Include addressed and stamped envelopes for each school to which you're applying.
- Provide teachers and counselors with deadlines for each recommendation that you are requesting, especially noting the earliest deadline.
- On the application form, waive your right to view recommendation letters. This gives more credibility to the recommendation in the eyes of the college.
- Typically, you know your teachers well enough to know who can provide favorable reviews of your accomplishments. In doubt, don't hesitate to ask if they feel comfortable writing recommendations. In some cases, you may have no choice as to

(Continued)



Irvine Unified School District
5050 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, CA 92604
(949) 936-5000

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION (Continued)

whom to use, but when you do, make the best choice possible.

- Follow up with your recommendation writers a week or so prior to your first deadlines, to ensure recommendations have been mailed or to see if they need additional information from you.
- Once you have decided which college to attend, write thank-you notes to everyone who provided a recommendation and tell them where you've decided to go to college. Be sure to do this before you leave high school.

Make sure your recommenders have everything they need to write your letter and submit it on time. That includes:

- Deadline information.
- Your full name, address, e-mail and phone number.
- Two copies of any forms they need to fill out (for a rough draft and a final draft).
- The name and address of the college or university and a copy of your completed essay and application.
- Provide a stamped addressed envelope for their convenience.
- Information about the school (a brochure or viewbook).
- A copy of your resume or a list of activities and achievements.

Remember, your recommenders are doing you a favor. Show your appreciation by sending a thank-you note.

Source: www.collegeboard.com

The Common Application

By Michael Pugh



You've narrowed your choice of colleges down to seven different schools. Now comes the fun part: filling out seven different applications. This means entering your name/address/school data over and over and writing multiple personal essays. And if you can't apply online, this means re-acquainting yourself with a typewriter.

At long last, an alternative is gaining momentum: the Common Application.

What Is the Common Application?

The Common Application is a standardized undergraduate college application form that is accepted at more than 298 accredited, independent colleges and universities nationwide. Schools that accept the Common Application include Boston University, Cornell College, New York University and Syracuse University. Some of these institutions use the Common Application exclusively.

The Common Application looks similar to most college applications, with all the usual fields for name, address, school and test data, as well as questions about your work experience and volunteer activities. For the personal essay, you may choose one of four questions, or propose a question of your own.

How Does it Work?

You can use the Common Application in one of two ways:

1. Download it for free. The four-page application functions just like a spreadsheet document, allowing you to jump

around from field to field, cut and paste text, and save multiple versions of your work. Once the form is complete, just print it out, photocopy it, and send it off to any number of participating institutions.

2. Complete the application online for free and submit it directly to participating institutions. The site is encrypted for your privacy and requires that you register beforehand. Once you've created an account you can save, alter and revise your application as often as you like before submitting.

Supplements and Extra Materials

Many colleges and universities require a supplement in addition to the Common Application. Supplements usually contain additional, institution-specific questions and, in some cases, additional essay questions. Most institutions that require supplements have them available for download on their Web site.

But just because a college or university doesn't require a supplement, don't be afraid to include extra materials. If you're a musician or artist, include samples of your work with your application. If you'd like to highlight additional volunteer or community work, include supplemental information.

Advantages

The obvious advantage to the Common Application is that it saves you time. Instead of typing the same information multiple times, you have only to do it once. More importantly, there's only one personal essay to write. This not only saves time, but also allows you to channel all your efforts into crafting a single, flawless essay.

If you choose to complete the application online, you also save postal time and fees.

Disadvantages

The main drawback to the Common Application is its limited acceptance. More than 240 colleges and universities currently accept the application, but that is still a fraction of the 4,000+ institutions around the country.

The Common Application continues to grow in acceptance, however, and may one day be accepted by the majority of colleges and universities.

Bottom Line

Filling out multiple college applications is tedious and time-consuming. If you're applying to two or more participating schools, the Common Application is well worth your while.

Source: www.fastweb.com

Important Test Dates and Registration Deadlines for the 2008-09 School Year

SAT & Subject Tests Dates

2008-09 TEST DATES

Nov. 1, 2008
Dec. 6, 2008
Jan. 24, 2009
March 14, 2009 (SAT only)
May 2, 2009
June 6, 2009

REG. DEADLINE

Sept. 26, 2008
Nov. 5, 2008
Dec. 26, 2008
Feb. 10, 2009
March 31, 2009
May 5, 2009

LATE REG. (Late Fee Req.)

Oct. 10, 2008
Nov. 18, 2008
Jan. 6, 2009
Feb. 24, 2009
April 9, 2009
May 15, 2009

Register online at www.collegeboard.com to sign up for tests.

ACT Test Dates

2008-09 TEST DATES

Oct. 25, 2008
Dec. 13, 2008
Feb. 7, 2009**
April 4, 2009
June 13, 2009

REG. DEADLINE

Sept. 19, 2008
Nov. 7, 2008
Jan. 6, 2009
Feb. 27, 2009
May 8, 2009

LATE REG. (Late Fee Req.)

Sept. 20 – Oct. 3, 2008
Nov. 8 – 20, 2008
Jan. 7 – 16, 2009
Feb. 28 – Mar. 13, 2009
May 9 – 22, 2009

Register online at www.act.org to sign up for tests.

COLLEGE PREP: ACTION PLAN FOR FALL

SENIORS

Now

Log on to www.commonapp.org and start filling out your common application. Even if your colleges don't accept it until November you can fill it out and come back later to submit it to colleges. Get ahead of the game.

October 1

Log on to www.csumentor.org and start applying to Cal State campuses.

November 1

Log on to www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions and start applying to the UC campuses.

Pull Your Applications Together

- Narrow your list of colleges to between five and ten and review it with your counselor. Get an application and financial aid info from each. Visit as many as possible.
- Make a master calendar and note:
 - Test dates, fees, and deadlines
 - College application due dates
 - Required financial aid applications and their deadlines
 - Recommendations, transcripts, and other necessary materials
 - Your high school's deadlines for application requests, such as your transcript
- Ask for letters of recommendation. Give each person your resume, a stamped, addressed envelope, and any required forms.
- Write application essays and ask teachers, parents, and friends to read first drafts.
- Discuss college costs with your parents. Ask if your college offers an early estimate of financial aid eligibility. Attend financial aid info events in your area.



JUNIORS

- Prepare for and take the PSAT. The PSAT in your junior year is the National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test.
- Put together a list of 10 colleges that you would like to attend. Plan to apply to at least 3 of those schools, if not all. Research their necessary requirements.
- Check dates for SAT, SAT Subject Tests and ACT test registration deadlines (in this issue). You'll want to take at least one or two SAT tests before the end of your junior year. Many schools require two or more subject tests too.

SOPHOMORES

- Prepare for and take the PLAN in October. You can also take the ACT and/or SAT this year, although it's not necessary. Do not put this off until your senior year! Establish a test-taking timeline with your counselor and update it each year of high school to be sure that you're on track.
- Think quality, not quantity when it comes to your extracurricular activities. Seek out leadership positions in a few activities that truly interest you. Colleges are more interested that you dedicate yourself to a few select activities than boast a long list of clubs, sports, groups, and interests.
- Private schools like to see a commitment to community service.
- Seek out college or university information.
- Update plans for high school courses and activities. Be sure you are on the right track and have a "game plan" in place.

FRESHMEN

- ★ Get to know your counselor. Talk to him/her about your goals after high school. Your counselor can be an invaluable resource for you in planning and choosing colleges that best suit you. Counselors are often asked to submit letters of recommendation for you to colleges.
- ★ Take the most rigorous courses you can handle. Colleges like students who have taken the most challenging courses available to them.
- ★ Work hard at developing your writing skills. Many universities require you to write several essays as part of the application process. Push yourself in your English classes to improve your writing as much as possible because writing skills are crucial to success.

Exploring Three Big Myths About SPORTS SCHOLARSHIPS

Tens of thousands of highly talented high school athletes end up putting their sports dreams on hold when they go to college, assuming that they could never be one of the elite that earns sports scholarships. This couldn't be further from the truth.

Myth #1: College coaches are the ones who initiate contact with most high school recruits.

Truth: Unless an athlete is an elite recruit—someone who has already gained widespread state and national recognition—college coaches rarely make first contact in the recruiting process.

Why is this so? It's because typical college coaches—the ones we don't see coaching on television — lack the resources to scour the nation looking for the best recruits. This is especially true at smaller colleges, which rarely have the financial means to scout athletes outside of their local region. Non-revenue producing sports at large universities (sports other than football and basketball), usually suffer from a similar lack of resources.

In other words, it's up to you! Despite what most people believe, it's the job of the enterprising student-athlete to recruit the coach, not the other way around. Most athletes who land scholarships are those who initiate contact with several coaches, market themselves well through written materials and highlight videos, and keep those coaches updated on their progress throughout the year.

Remember, just because coaches aren't knocking on your door doesn't mean you can't knock on theirs!

Myth #2: To earn an athletic scholarship, an individual must be a star athlete.

Truth: Most athletes who receive college scholarships are not the elite athletes we often hear about in the media.

In 2001, nearly 200,000 students at the NCAA Division I and II levels received athletic scholarships worth a combined \$975,000,000. Of these, only roughly 5 percent of scholarship recipients were the "blue-chippers" who were recruited on a national level. This leaves, during any given year, about 190,000 scholarships for the talented, competent student-athletes who may not be the standout stars. Furthermore, these figures don't even consider the thousands of student-athletes who receive scholarships from schools affiliated with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) or the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). In addition, nearly 150,000 student-athletes receive preferred admission and financial-aid packages at NCAA Division III or Ivy League schools, which do not offer traditional athletic scholarships.

For those who go about the recruiting process correctly, there are plenty of opportunities available for athletes who are talented, determined, marketable, and flexible in what schools they would like to attend.

Myth #3: Most athletic scholarships are "full ride" awards that cover the entire cost of college.

Truth: Outside of NCAA Division I football and basketball, most athletic grants are partial scholarships covering only a portion of an athlete's tuition, books, and room and board.

The percentage of tuition and expenses covered by partial scholarships varies on an individual basis and is determined by the university. An incoming freshman, for example, might have half of his tuition covered, but receive no aid for books or room or board. A second athlete might have none of his tuition covered, but receive free room and board.

Why is this the case? It's because many coaches choose to divide their scholarships among several athletes. A swimming coach, for instance, might divide his allotment of 10 scholarships among 20 athletes by offering partial-tuition scholarships. Many coaches use this strategy because they believe they can recruit a better team with 20 half scholarships than with 10 full ones.

Exceptions to this rule are in sports such as football, for which only full scholarships can be awarded, and basketball, in which teams rarely have more players than the number of scholarships they can award, thus enabling them to offer each athlete a full scholarship.

While everyone would love to earn a full ride, the good news about partial scholarships is that greater numbers of athletes are getting substantial scholarship dollars to pursue their educational and athletic goals.

Source: www.scholarshipcoach.com



Early Decision or Early Action?

If you find a college that you're sure is right for you, consider applying early. Early decision and early action plans allow you to apply early (usually in November) and get an admissions decision from the college well in advance of the usual spring notification date. You'll know by December or January whether you've been accepted at your first-choice college.

Sometimes, students who apply under these plans have a better chance of acceptance than they would through the regular admissions process. These plans are also good for colleges because they get students who really want to go to the school to commit early in the process.

Early Decision vs. Early Action

You should be aware of the differences between early decision and early action before sending in your applications. The exact rules may vary somewhat by college. Check with your counselor to make sure you understand your rights and obligations.

Early decision plans are binding. You agree to attend the college if it accepts you and offers an adequate financial aid package. Although you can apply to only one college for early decision, you may apply to other colleges through the regular admissions process. If you're accepted by your first-choice college early, you must withdraw all other applications. Usually, colleges insist on a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1.

Early action plans are similar but are not binding, unlike early decision. If you've been accepted, you can choose to commit to the college immediately, or wait until the spring. Under these plans, you may also apply early action to other colleges. Usually, you have until the late spring to let the college know your decision.

Single-choice early action is a new option offered by a few colleges. This plan works the same way as other early action plans, but candidates may not apply early (either early action or early decision) to any other school. You can still apply to other schools and are not required to give your final answer of acceptance until the regular decision deadline.

<u>Application Type</u>	<u>Binding</u>	<u>Can Apply Early to Other Colleges</u>	<u>Can Apply to Other Colleges Under Regular Admissions</u>
Early Decision	Yes	No	Yes
Early Action	No	Yes	Yes
Single-Choice Early Action	No	No	Yes

Should I Apply Under One of These Plans?

You should apply under an early decision or early action plan only if you are very sure of the college you want to attend. Do not apply under an early decision or early action plan if you plan to weigh offers and financial aid packages from several colleges later in the spring. Also, you shouldn't apply early if it is advantageous to have more of your senior year work to show a college.

Do Your Research

Before applying to an early decision or early action plan, research all your options to decide which college is the right one for you.

Get Input

You do not have to apply early decision or early action; they are simply options you

might want to consider. Talk with your parents about whether it is in your best interest. It's important that they understand there might be financial implications.

Get advice from your high school counselor and other trusted advisors before applying to a college as an early decision applicant. Your counselor is a trained, objective professional who serves as your advocate in the college search process.

A Last Word of Advice

In the fall, it may seem appealing to get the college decision over with, but you may find your goals changing as your senior year progresses. On the other hand, you may be confident of thriving at a certain college. If so, you're the type of student for whom early decision was created.

Early Decision and Early Action Calendar

If you are even considering the option of early decision or early action, here are the steps you need to take:



SENIOR YEAR

September-October

- ◆ Work on and complete applications.
- ◆ Get teachers to fill out recommendation forms.
- ◆ File early decision or early action applications according to school deadlines and procedures.
- ◆ Take the SAT or ACT if necessary (Note: October is the last test date that makes scores available in time for early decision and early action programs).
- ◆ If necessary, register for CSS/Financial Aid.

November

- ◆ Continue filing early decision or early action applications according to specific school deadlines.
- ◆ Follow up with teacher recommendations.
- ◆ Work on regular-decision applications as a backup if not accepted early decision or early action.
- ◆ File for college-based financial aid forms that may be required of early decision candidates.

JUNIOR YEAR

January-May

- Take the SAT and/or ACT.
- Visit colleges during spring break.

May-June

- Take SAT Subject Tests™, if required.
- Work hard and keep up good grades (colleges only have a transcript through junior year).



SCHOLARSHIPS

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AUDIO ESSAY CONTEST

Provided by: Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Deadline: November 1, 2008

Amount varies: \$1,000 - \$16,000

Web site: www.vfw.org

Description: The Voice of Democracy National Audio Essay Contest is open to students in grades 9 through 12. You must write and record an essay of between three and five minutes. Essay themes are announced annually and are listed on the Web site. Each state winner will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. where they will compete for national scholarships, including a \$30,000 first place scholarship.

BRICKFISH "PAMPERED PET"

Provided by: Brickfish

Deadline: November 11, 2008

Amount varies: \$100 - \$500, 7 awards

Web site: www.brickfish.com/Lifestyles/ThePamperedPet?tab=overview

Description: The Brickfish "Pampered Pet" Promotion is open to all high school students. with access to the Internet. To be eligible for this promotion, you must submit a photo, blog or video that describes how you pamper your pet.

INTEL SCIENCE TALENT SEARCH

Provided by: Intel

Deadline: November 19, 2008

Amount varies: \$1,000 - \$100,000

Web site: www.intel.com/education/sts/

Description: The Intel Science Talent Search is one of the most prestigious scientific research competitions for high school seniors in the United States. Winners are selected on the basis of their potential as future scientists and researchers. 40 finalists are invited on an all-expense-paid trip to the Science Talent Institute in Washington, DC in March, where the winners are selected. All finalists also receive a high performance computer.

L.A. PHILHARMONIC BRONISLAW KAPER AWARDS

Provided by: Los Angeles Philharmonic

Deadline: December 1, 2008

Amount varies: \$500-\$2,500, 4 awards

Web site: www.laphil.com

Description: The Bronislaw Kaper Awards For Young Artists are held annually by the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the piano and strings instrumental categories, which alternate each year. Named in honor of the late Bronislaw Kaper, a renowned film composer who served for more than 15 years as a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association's Board of Directors, the Awards encourage the development of young and gifted musicians.

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE AWARD

Provided by: Global Challenge Inc.

Deadline: December 15, 2008

Amount varies: up to \$3,500

Web site: www.globalchallengeaward.org

Description: The Global Challenge is open to high school students. To participate in this challenge, you will work in international teams of four high school students (two from the U.S. and two from another country) and work together over the Internet to identify a solution that addresses some aspect of climate change and the future of energy. Two levels of competition are available to you: the Technical Innovation and the Global Business Plan Competitions. In the Technical Innovation Plan Competition you must prepare and submit a description of your innovative idea for solving the world's global climate crisis. In the Global Business Plan Competition, your team must extend that idea to show its potential as a feasible global business through the development of a detailed business plan.

ALL-INK.COM COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Provided by: All-Ink.com

Deadline: December 31, 2008

Amount: equal to \$1,000

Web site: www.all-ink.com/scholarship.aspx

Description: The All-Ink.com College Scholarship Program is available to students who are enrolled or planning to enroll in an accredited college or university with a minimum 2.5 GPA. To apply for this scholarship, you must submit a 50- to 200-word essay on who has had the greatest impact on your life, and a 50- to 200-word essay on what you hope to achieve in your personal and professional life after college.

2ND ANNUAL CREATE-A-GREETING-CARD \$10,000 SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

Provided by: The Gallery Collection

Deadline: January 15, 2009

Amount: \$10,000, 1 award

Web site: www.gallerycollection.com/scholarship.htm

Description: Open to high school, college, and graduate students. Applicants are asked to design the front of a greeting card that could be sold as an actual card in our line. Designs may consist of original photographs, artwork, and/or computer graphics. The student with the winning design will be awarded a \$10,000 scholarship and his or her design will be made into a greeting card to be sold on our Web site.

**...don't forget to check the individual schools where you're applying
and see if they have their own scholarships!**



SCHOLARSHIPS

THE YOUNG NATURALIST AWARDS

Provided by: American Museum of Natural History

Deadline: April 1, 2009

Amount varies: Maximum Amount \$2,500,
12 awards

Web site: www.amnh.org/nationalcenter/youngnaturalistawards/

Description: The Young Naturalist Awards Program hosted by the American Museum of Natural History, invites students in grades 7 through 12 to conduct original research in the areas of biology, earth science or astronomy. Students work independently to make observations, record data, and illustrate findings, before documenting their research in a written essay. The twelve finalists (two per grade) receive scholarships ranging from \$500-\$2500 and are flown to New York City to meet Museum scientists to take a behind-the-scenes tour of the Museum, and to attend an awards ceremony.

FYI - FILM YOUR ISSUE SHORT FILM COMPETITION

Provided by: National Organization of The American Legion

Deadline: April 14, 2009

Amount varies: \$5,000, plus intership opportunities

Web site: www.filmyourissue.com

Description: What's Your Issue? Open to students 14 to 24 globally. We want to encourage young adults to contribute to the public dialogue on pressing issues — and even influence policy. Submit your film with a maximum length: 2 minutes

AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST

Provided by: The American Legion

Deadline: Varies

Amount varies: \$14,000 - \$18,000, 3 awards

Web site: www.legion.org

Description: "A Constitutional Speech Contest" is to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States on the part of high school students.

Each State winner who is certified into and participates in the first round of the National Contest will receive a \$1,500 scholarship. Each first round winner who advances to and participates in the second round but does not advance to the Final Round, will receive an additional \$1,500 scholarship to pursue education beyond high school.

A VOICE FOR ANIMALS

Provided by: Humane Education Network

Deadline: March 10, 2009

Amount varies: Maximum Amount \$1,000,
4 awards

Web site: www.hennet.org

Description: The Humane Education Network holds its annual A Voice for Animals high school essay contest. Prizes are awarded to high school students whose essays best promote the humane treatment of animals in the United States. The contest is open to all high school students. Students must submit an essay that examines either the mistreatment of one animal species or one cause of animal suffering, occurring anywhere in the world, and possible measures to reduce it.

JFI MEMORIAL DAY SCHOLARSHIP

Provided by: Joe Foss Institute

Deadline: May 31, 2009

Amount: \$5,000, 1 award

Web site: www.JFIweb.org

Description: Eligible contestants must be middle or high school (7th-12th) students. Write a 1,500 word essay and focus clearly on the theme, "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" — How my Life Today is Affected by Patrick Henry'.

DUCK BRAND "STUCK AT PROM" SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

Provided by: Henkel Consumer Adhesives, Inc.

Deadline: June 8, 2009

Amount varies: Maximum Amount \$2,500,
3 awards

Web site: www.ducktapeclub.com

Description: Each couple must submit one color photograph of the couple together in prom attire.

SAFETY SCHOLARS VIDEO CONTEST BY BRIDGESTONE FIRESTONE

Provided by: Bridgestone Firestone North American Tire, LLC

Deadline: June 24, 2009

Amount: \$5,000, 3 awards

Web site: www.safetyscholars.com

Description: Produce a video in a creative format to help make roads safer for everyone. This contest includes a chance for young filmmakers to have their auto safety videos broadcast as a public service commercial. The contest will award three \$5,000 college scholarships for the most compelling and effective videos that drive home life-saving messages on auto and tire safety. The top 10 filmmakers will also receive a new set of Bridgestone tires.

Save The Date! Save The Date!

COLLEGE NIGHT

Save The Date! Save The Date!

Wednesday, October 29th • 7:00-9:00 PM

NORTHWOOD HIGH SCHOOL