



## Common App FAQs

**Note:** Our School Counselors arrange appointments with each of their respective seniors early in September to review their individual Common App together and answer any questions they may have.

### 1. Do I need a separate application for each college?

No— in most instances, you fill out one Common App profile, and it can be sent to multiple colleges. Each school may ask additional questions or may require supplemental essays.

### 2. How many schools can I apply to on the Common App?

Up to 20 colleges. Most students apply to 5–10.

### 3. Does it cost money?

Yes, most schools charge an application fee (usually \$50–\$90). Fee waivers are available if paying application fees presents a financial hardship. If this is the case, please talk with your school counselor.

### 4. What if my family situation is complicated (divorced parents, guardians, etc.)?

List the adults you live with and follow the prompts. If you're unsure, ask your school counselor — the system is flexible.

### 5. How many activities should I list?

You can list up to 10, but don't stress if you don't have that many. Quality matters more than quantity. Remember that the activities listed within your Common App should be ones that you have participated in throughout high school.

### 6. Should I include work or hobbies?

Yes! Jobs, family responsibilities, hobbies, and volunteer work all count as activities.

### 7. How should I describe my activities?

Use short, clear phrases. Focus on your role and impact (e.g., "Tutored 3rd graders in math — improved class test scores").

### **8. Which essay prompt should I pick?**

Choose the one that lets you share your story best. There's no "best prompt." What matters is being authentic and avoiding cliches.

### **9. How long should my essay be?**

The limit is 650 words. Most strong essays are 500–650 words. Remember that one of the challenges of this essay is being concise!

### **10. Can I get help with my essay?**

Yes — teachers, counselors, or family can give feedback, but the writing must be your own voice. We always recommend having multiple people proofread your essay before it is submitted!

### **11. How do I send recommendations?**

When you meet with your school counselor for your senior meeting, they will go over this process. Do NOT invite teachers and counselors through the Common App. We use SCOIR to request and process recommendations.

### **12. Do I need to send test scores?**

Whether or not to send test scores is a personal decision and is one that can vary depending on the college you are applying to. Some colleges require them, some recommend them, and some will not consider them. As a rule, test scores should only be sent when a college (or specific program) requires them, or when your test scores are higher than the average for a particular college (this can be determined by looking at the average test scores of their admitted students on the college's website). If required, you'll need to send official scores through College Board (SAT) or ACT. When requesting scores, please ensure ample time for them to reach their destination by the deadline as processing is not instantaneous.

### **13. What are supplemental essays?**

Some colleges require shorter (typically between 250-500 words) essays that are specific to their school. Supplemental essay topics can range from "Why do you want to attend our school" to "Please expand upon your experiences with a particular extracurricular activity and what it means to you".

### **14. Can I reuse supplement answers?**

Sometimes — but always adjust to fit each college. Admissions officers can tell if an answer is copy-pasted. Additionally, a supplemental essay is an opportunity to tailor a response specific to one college, so be sure to take advantage of the opportunity.

**15. What's the difference between Early Action, Early Decision, and Regular Decision?**

- Early Action (EA): Apply early, get an early answer, not binding.
- Early Decision (ED): Apply early, must attend if accepted (binding).
- Regular Decision (RD): Apply by the regular deadline (we recommend getting all applications out by December break), get decisions in spring.

**16. Can I change my application after I submit it?**

No — once submitted, it's final. Review carefully before pressing submit.

**17. How do I know if my application is complete?**

The "My Colleges" tab shows the status for each school. You'll also get confirmation emails after submission. Additionally, be sure to check your email frequently as colleges will reach out to you if you are missing any necessary materials.

You will also need to request to have your transcript and letters of recommendation sent to each college you apply to. This is done through submitting a pink Application Processing Form (which can be found in the high school Counseling Center) to your school counselor. Please be sure to turn those forms in two weeks before any deadlines in order to ensure that all materials arrive by the deadline.

**18. Is the Common App the same as FAFSA?**

No — the Common App is a college admission application, whereas FAFSA is a financial aid application, which needs to be filled out separately. Please see our Counseling Center website for more information about the FAFSA, and please plan to attend our Financial Aid presentation on September 29th at 6 pm to learn more about the FAFSA.

**19. Do I need to do the CSS Profile too?**

Some private colleges require the CSS Profile (in addition to FAFSA) for financial aid. Check each school's website in order to see what is required.

**20. Do the college classes I took in high school count in response to the question, have you ever taken a class at a college or university?**

Yes! If you took a dual enrollment course (i.e., OCC, Albany, Oswego) or a community college course while you were in high school, that counts as a college class. AP or honors classes do not count here. If you are unsure about which classes count as dual enrollment, please ask your counselor.

**21. How do I answer the question about class rank reporting?**

Since we do not rank our students, you will put none. Colleges know many schools don't rank anymore. *Not having a rank will not hurt you.* Admissions offices look at your GPA, transcript, and school profile instead.

## **22. What is our school's GPA scale?**


Skaneateles GPAs are out of 100.

## **23. My transcript includes both my weighted and unweighted GPA. Which one should I select?**

Use the weighted GPA. Colleges expect to see it and know how to interpret it. If the Common App allows an "additional GPA" field, you can add the unweighted one too. The counselor's report will cover both regardless. The weighted GPA from your transcript is the "official" number colleges typically consider first. Rest assured admissions officers will see both.

## **24. What is our class size?**

As this number may fluctuate throughout the year, the number is officially reported by your school counselor. If asked, use the current senior class size and confirm with your counselor, our registrar or principal. The current class of 2026 as of August 2025 has 104 students.

 **Tip: *Stay organized!*** Keep a checklist of deadlines, recommendation requests, and supplemental essays for each college.

Our experienced School Counselors are ready, willing, and able to respond to your questions. Stop in, call, or email with whatever questions or concerns you may have regarding any part of the college process. Keep an eye and an ear open for information provided from our counselors via Google Chat, over daily announcements, or via ParentSquare.