

# Common App Tips for 2025-2026

Your Guide to Completing the College Application with Confidence



## Before You Start:

- Make sure you have a **working email** you check regularly (Not your school email)
- Create your account at: [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)
- Make a list of the colleges you're applying to and add them to Common App

## Sections to Complete:

### 1. Profile

- Use your **legal name** (must match school records)
- Fill in contact info and citizenship status accurately

### 2. Family

- Know your parent(s)' **education levels and occupations**

### 3. Education

- Add your **high school**
- Report **GPA exactly as it appears** on your transcript (also found at the bottom of last Junior report card)
- List any **Dual Enrollment or college courses**. This can be found on your current transcript

### 4. Testing

- Only report **SAT/ACT scores** if required by your colleges and if reporting only report score that match
- Select "I do not want to report" if applying test-optional

### 5. Activities

- List up to **10 activities** (clubs, jobs, volunteering, etc.)
- Focus on **impact, leadership, and commitment**- how through these activities you serve.
- Use action words: "Organized," "Led," "Created," "Assisted," etc.

### 6. Writing

- **Choose one essay prompt** from the 7 Common App options
- Stay within the **250-650-word limit**
- Write in your **own voice** – be authentic, specific, and reflective
- Ask someone to **review your essay, proof-read and check grammar** before submitting

Category	"Safety"	"Good Matches"	"Reach"
What is it?	A school that you would be comfortable and happy attending <b>with statistics and requirements that you exceed.</b>	A school with <b>requirements that you have a good chance of acceptance and are a good match.</b> You meet all of the criteria, but may not exceed it significantly.	A school with <b>requirements that you are just shy of.</b>
How many?*	1-2	2-4	1-2

## Counselor + Teacher Recs:

- Add your **School Counselor** and any teacher recommenders
- **Waive your FERPA rights** so colleges know your letters are confidential
- Give recommenders at least **2-3 weeks' notice**

- **Link with Naviance**...very important (Transcripts can NOT be sent without this step)
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## Common App – Tips for Filling Out the Honors Section

The Honors section on the Common App is found under the “Education” section. You can list up to five honors or awards you've received during high school. These can be academic, extracurricular, or community-related. For each honor, you'll need to include:

- The title (up to 100 characters)
- The grade(s) you received it (9–12)
- The level of recognition (school, state, national, or international)
- A short description (optional, up to 100 characters)

Here's how to approach it:

### 1. Choose your most meaningful honors

You don't need to have five, but try to list the ones that show achievement or commitment. These could be awards for academics (like Honor Roll or AP Scholar), extracurriculars (like debate or sports), or service (like a community award or recognition from a local group).

If you're not sure something counts as an “honor,” ask yourself: Were you selected for something based on your performance or contribution? That probably qualifies.

### 2. Start with your strongest recognitions

If one of your honors is recognized at a national or state level, put it first. Local or school-level awards can still be listed, but try to lead with the ones that show broader recognition or a higher level of accomplishment.

### 3. Keep the wording simple

Avoid trying to sound impressive or formal. Just be clear about what the honor is.

#### Instead of:

"Was honored with the distinguished academic achievement medal"

#### Write:

"Academic Achievement Medal – top GPA in junior class"

### 4. Use the description space only if needed

If the honor is self-explanatory (like “National Honor Society”), you don't need to explain it. But if the name of the award isn't familiar, or it came from a local organization, you can use the short description to explain what it was for or how selective it was.

#### Examples:

“Selected as 1 of 3 students from my school for city-wide STEM challenge” “Given to students with 250+ service hours in one school year”

## 5. Use numbers or details when you can

Including a number—like a class rank, score, or how many students participated—helps give context to the honor. It's not required, but it can make your entry clearer.

### Examples:

"Top 10% of class, GPA 5.20"

"1st place out of 15 students in county-wide writing contest"

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### Sample Honors Section (for reference)

Honor	Grades	Level	Description
National Honor Society	11, 12	School	Selected based on GPA, service, and leadership
AP Scholar	11	National	Scored 3 or higher on 3+ AP exams
Silver Knight Nominee – Journalism	12	Regional	Nominated by school for leadership in journalism
Key Club District Award	12	State	Recognized for completing 350+ service hours
College Board Recognition	12	National	Selected based on PSAT scores and GPA

# Activities Section Examples & Tips

Here are some examples for Common App on how to demonstrate leadership in your activities section

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## **For each Activity you participate in, brainstorm these questions:**

- *What exactly did I do/my Roll • Problems I solved*
- *Lessons learned / skills gained*
- *Impact I had in school/community*
- *What made this experience unique*

Remember you *ONLY* have 10 entries with 150 characters so ...

- *List activities in order of importance, leadership rolls should go on top*
- *Don't worry about complete sentences*
- *Focus on quality over quantity*
- *Demonstrate leadership and depth of involvement*

## **Examples:**

### **Boy Scouts / Troop Leader**

- **Position/Description:** Troop Leader, Boy Scouts of America
- **Details (150 characters):** Long-term Scout; led troop activities, organized service projects, mentoring younger scouts; completing Eagle Scout project.

### **JV Baseball Captain**

- **Position/Description:** Captain, Junior Varsity Baseball Team
- **Details (150 characters):** Led team practices and games, supported teammates, developed leadership and teamwork skills on and off the field.

### **Orthodontics Internship**

- **Position/Description:** Summer Internship, Orthodontics Office
- **Details (150 characters):** Assisted with patient X-rays, learned about orthodontic procedures, supported office staff with clerical and organizational tasks.

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## Honor Societies

**National Honor Society (Vice President)** – organized tutoring sessions, community projects, and initiatives to support student success. Recognized for academic excellence and service;

**Rho Kappa (Social Studies)** – Explored history and government topics, led civic engagement initiatives, and coordinated service projects for school and community.

**MU Alpha Theta (Math)** – Tutored peers, promoted math competitions, and led initiatives to encourage student achievement in STEM subjects.

**Tri-M Music Honor Society** – Performed at school and community events; coordinated service projects using music to inspire and educate others.

**Theology Honor Society** – Deepened faith through service, study, and leadership in school religious activities and retreats.

**English Honor Society** – Promoted literacy, organized book drives, supported peer writing workshops, and encouraged schoolwide reading engagement.

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## Athletics

**Football Captain** – Led practices, motivated teammates, represented the team at school events, and developed leadership, resilience, and collaboration skills.

**Volleyball Captain** – Organized team drills, guided younger players, promoted communication, and fostered strong teamwork and sportsmanship.

**Baseball (JV Center Fielder)** – Contributed to competitive play, practiced leadership and focus, and supported team success through discipline and sportsmanship.

Directed team practices and games, motivated teammates, promoted sportsmanship, and built teamwork and resilience on and off the field

**Basketball Team** – Participated in school athletics, building teamwork, time management, and commitment while representing the team at competitions.

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## Clubs & Leadership

**Campus Ministry** – Planned retreats, prayer services, and service projects; guided peers in spiritual growth and faith-based leadership opportunities.

**Best Buddies** – Organized inclusive events, built friendships, and mentored peers with disabilities to foster community and social connection.

**HOSA (Future Health Professionals)** – Coordinated competitions, organized community service events, and mentored peers in healthcare career exploration.

**Student Government (Vice President)** – Represented the student body, organized events, and collaborated with administration to implement school initiatives.

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**Archie's Ocean** – Led beach/ocean cleanups, organized awareness campaigns, and inspired peers to take action in environmental stewardship projects.

**Book Club** – Facilitated discussions, led reading initiatives, and encouraged critical thinking and engagement among fellow students.

**Carroll Ambassadors** – Represented the school at events, welcomed families, and mentored prospective students in admissions and campus visits.

**Choir** – Directed performances for liturgies and concerts, fostering teamwork, musical excellence, and student participation.

**Club Purple** – Creates Epilepsy Awareness, Led school awareness campaigns and organized educational projects advocating for epilepsy research and support.

**Crochet Club** – Coordinated charity projects, taught crochet skills, and created handmade items for community donation.

**Dungeons & Dragons Club** – Organized and led role-playing sessions, encouraging teamwork, strategy, and creative problem-solving among members.

**E-Sports** – Managed competitions and practice sessions, mentoring team members and promoting strategy, collaboration, and sportsmanship.

**Fashion Club** – Directed creative design and charity projects, mentoring peers and organizing school fashion events.

**Fishing Club** – Led excursions teaching fishing techniques, promoting environmental awareness, and encouraging outdoor engagement.

**Little Lights Club** – Directed kindness and outreach initiatives, promoting a positive school culture and peer mentorship.

**Mental Health Awareness Club** – Organized educational events, promoted wellness initiatives, and reduced stigma around mental health.

**Respect Life Club** – Led advocacy campaigns, service projects, and events emphasizing the dignity and value of human life.

**School Spirit Club / Carroll Crew** – Planned rallies and schoolwide events to build spirit, participation, and community engagement.

**Spanish Club** – Led cultural and language-focused activities, promoting Hispanic heritage, inclusion, and student engagement.

**Sports Medicine Club** – Managed athlete support programs, mentored peers in injury prevention, and taught first aid and care techniques.

**Student Government Association (SGA)** – Led initiatives, planned school events, and represented student voices to administration and faculty.

**Newspaper (The Mustang Press)** – Directed article projects, mentored writers, and highlighted student achievements through journalism.

**Veterinary Science Club** – Organized workshops, service projects, and mentoring for students interested in animal care careers.

**VIPConnect Carroll** – Led mentorship and inclusion programs, promoted positive campus culture, and connected students across grade levels.

**Boy Scouts / Troop Leader** – Led troop activities, organized service projects, and mentored younger scouts; designed and completed Eagle Scout project demonstrating leadership.



**Final Checklist Before Submitting:**

- Proofread each section
- Make sure each college's supplemental questions/essays are done
- Check your **submission deadlines** (some Early Action dates are Oct 15 & Nov 1)
- Pay any application fees or request fee waivers if eligible