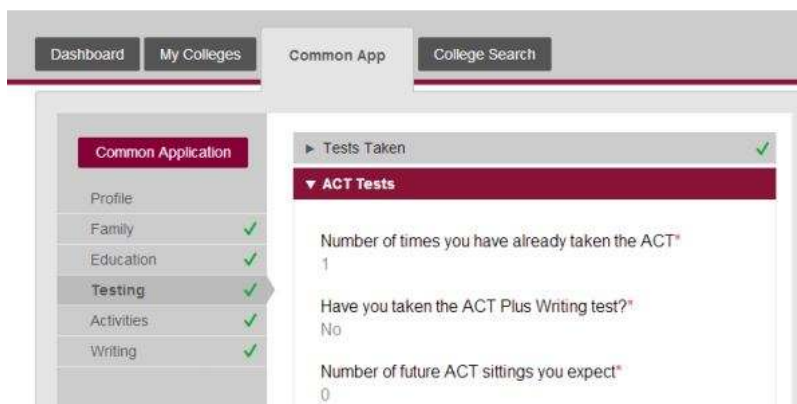


What to Know Before Submitting the New Common App [Part 1]

Late on July 31st, the [2013-14 Common Application](#) went live, enabling thousands of eager students to get a head start on completing their college applications. And while the newly touted design is supposed to provide a more intuitive user-friendly experience, many students are running into unexpected and understandably frustrating difficulties. Common Application officials assure us that they are hard at work trying to fix a host of glitches and errors, especially those revolving around college specific supplements. In the meantime, however, we've put together ten tips and suggestions to help you successfully navigate and make the most of the new Common Application.

1. Test scores: to post or not to post?

As usual students have the option of self-reporting their own GPAs, class ranks, and test scores. On this year's application, however, students who self-report SAT or ACT scores must also indicate (a) the number of times they've already taken those exams and (b) the number of times they expect to take those exams in the future. If you've taken the SAT exam three or four times and are a little reluctant to share that information with colleges, we don't blame you! Similarly, what if you've taken both exams but only want colleges to see your ACT score? Your best bet is to simply leave this entire section blank. Let the [college admissions committee](#) learn about your GPA, class rank, and/or test scores from official documents where there's less room for error.

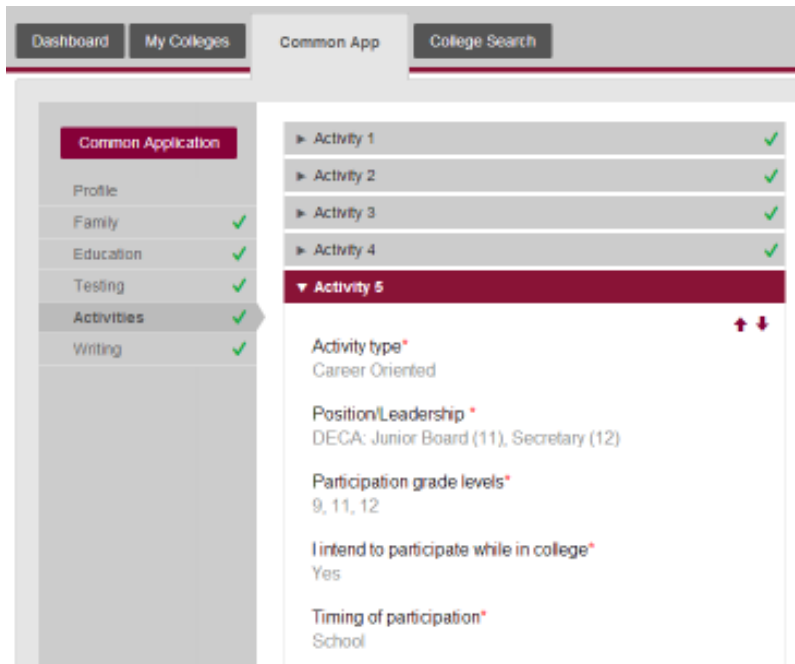


The screenshot shows the 'Common App' interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'Dashboard', 'My Colleges', 'Common App', and 'College Search'. The 'Common App' tab is active. On the left, a sidebar menu lists sections: 'Common Application', 'Profile', 'Family', 'Education', 'Testing', 'Activities', and 'Writing'. The 'Testing' section is highlighted with a green checkmark. The main content area shows the 'Tests Taken' section, which is expanded to show 'ACT Tests'. The form contains the following fields:

- Number of times you have already taken the ACT*: 1
- Have you taken the ACT Plus Writing test?: No
- Number of future ACT sittings you expect*: 0

2. Résumé tips

Participated in...led...managed...contributed to. When completing the "Activities" portion of the application, it's always best to use a variety of "action verbs" to describe your [extra-curricular involvement](#). On the new Common Application, applicants no longer have the benefit of seeing all of their activities on the same page, making it difficult to know if your descriptions sound a bit monotonous. Our suggestion? Draft your activity details in a Word document, and then cut and paste them into the Common Application. This way you can ensure that you're using a range of colorful verbs. Don't forget that you have 50 characters to list your position/leadership and 150 characters to describe your details, honors, and accomplishments.



3. Formatting your essay

Gone are days of uploading your personal statement to the body of the Common Application. Now students are simply required to cut and paste their essay into a text box. There are two very important features you should know about this text box. The first is that it will not allow you to enter more than 650 words or fewer than 250 words. This word limit is new for the Common Application. So, too, is the block formatting of paragraphs. New paragraphs will no longer appear indented. Rather, they show up as isolated blocks of text, with one empty line between each paragraph. The new formatting won't bother colleges, so there's no need to fret that your once indented paragraphs are now showing up a little differently in the print preview.

Please write an essay (250-650 words) on the topic selected.*

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

"My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is," returned she; "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

"You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

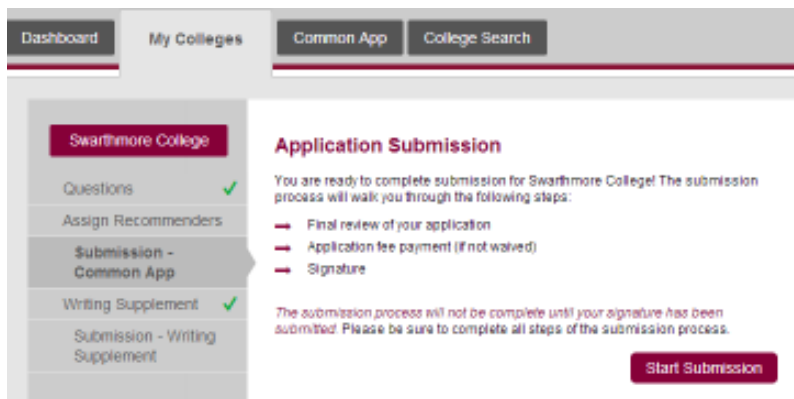
This was invitation enough.

"Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to

Which leads us to:

4. Where *is* the print preview button?

Alas, it's gone! I do hope they bring it back, but for now, there's only one way to see a print preview of your application. And you have to jump through three hoops to get there. First, you need to complete every required field of the Common Application itself. This means you see six green check marks when you're on the "Common App" tab. Second, any school-specific questions or essays need to be completed. When you're looking at a school on the "My Colleges" tab, do you see a green check mark next to "Questions" as well as "Writing Supplement"? If not, go back and fill out those sections. Finally, you need to complete the FERPA Release Authorization and assign required recommenders (found on the "Assign Recommenders" link from either the "Dashboard" or "My Colleges" tab). Then, and only then, will you see the "Submit" button from the "Dashboard," or the "Start Submission" button from the "My Colleges" page. Once you're looking at the print preview – which, incidentally, looks exactly the way colleges will see it, minus the watermark – you can right click with your mouse to save the PDF to your computer.



5. College requirements grid

Are you looking for an easy way to [see college application deadlines](#) and testing requirements all in a simple glance? Enter the Application Requirements Grid! This year, you physically have to log out of your Common Application account in order to find it. From the Common Application homepage, mouse over "Member Colleges" at the top of the screen; then select "Application Requirements". Download and enjoy!



Common App Member	TYPE	DEADLINES						APP FEES		SUPPLEMENTS		MINIMUM STANDARD TEST POLICY	
		ED	EDII	EA	EAI	REA	RD/ROLLING	US	INTL	ART	WRITING	SAT/ACT Tests Used	TEST POLICY
Adelphi University				12/1/2013			ROLLING	40	50	COL	Absent Info	SATorACTwithWriting	A
Agnes Scott College	W			8/15/2013		2/1/2014	3/1/2014	0	0			SATorACTwithWriting	N
Alaska Pacific University		8/15/2013					ROLLING	0	0			SATorACTwoWriting	A
Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences		11/1/2013					2/1/2014	75	75			SATorACTwithWriting	A
Albion College				11/1/2013	12/1/2013		2/1/2014	0	0			SATorACTwithWriting	A
Albright College							ROLLING	0	0		See Website	N	
Alfred University		12/1/2013					ROLLING	50	50	SR		SATorACTwoWriting	A
Allegheny College		11/15/2013	1/15/2014				2/15/2014	0	0			SATorACTwoWriting	A
Alma College							ROLLING	0	0			SATorACTwoWriting	A
American University		11/15/2013	1/15/2014				1/15/2014	70	70	SR		SATorACTwithWriting	N
Amherst College		11/15/2013					1/1/2014	60	60	SR		SATnoWR2SuborACTnoWR	A
Anna Maria College							ROLLING	25	25	SR		SATorACTwithWriting	N
Arcadia University				1/15/2014			3/1/2014	0	0	COL		SATorACTwithWriting	A
Assumption College				11/1/2013	12/15/2013		2/15/2014	50	50			SATorACTwithWriting	N
Augsburg College		11/15/2013		12/15/2013			ROLLING	0	0			SATorACTwithWriting	A
Augustana College (Illinois)							ROLLING	0	0			SATorACTwoWriting	N
Augustana College (South Dakota)							ROLLING	0	0			SATorACTwithWriting	A
Austin College				12/1/2013	1/15/2014		3/1/2014	0	0			SATorACTwithWriting	A
Babson College		11/1/2013		11/1/2013			1/3/2014	75	75			SATorACTwithWriting	A
Baldwin Wallace University							ROLLING	0	0			SATorACTwithWriting	N
Bard College				11/1/2013			1/1/2014	50	50		See Website	N	
Barnard College	W	11/1/2013					1/1/2014	65	65	SR		SAT2subjorACTwWriting	A
Bates College		11/15/2013	1/1/2014				1/1/2014	60	0	COL		See Website	N
Belmont University				10/15/2013	12/1/2013		ROLLING	50	50			SATorACTwoWriting	A
Beloit College		11/1/2013		11/1/2013	12/1/2013		1/15/2014	0	0	COL		SATorACTwoWriting	A
Bennington College		11/15/2013	1/3/2014	12/1/2013			1/3/2014	60	60			SATorACTwoWriting	N

Stay tuned for advice on parents' occupations, that pesky "leaving examinations" question, deleting activities from your activities list, supplemental essays, and incomplete questions. We'll be tackling those topics later this week!