

YOUR JOURNEY TO COLLEGE

Applications Dos & Don'ts



DO:

Highlight your strengths and talents to make you sure you stand out from other applicants – don't be shy. This is the time to market your accomplishments.

Make sure that your application has no spelling or grammatical errors. Have your essay and application reviewed by someone.

Answer every question that is asked completely and thoroughly. Use the space allotted to complete your answers.

Know that if you need to call the Admissions Office in regard to a question, it is preferable that you make the call rather than your parent, whenever possible.

Read the application instructions thoroughly before answering questions and make sure you answer the question that was asked.

Be selective about who you ask to write your recommendation – make sure that they are articulate and that they know you well. It is often better to ask a teacher in whose class you struggled, persevered and improved rather than one where you received straight A's all year. Provide background information for the teacher in regard how you performed in their class and highlight strengths that they can draw from. Give them access to any form the college wishes them to submit on your behalf. Follow up with the teacher and the college to make sure the reference was submitted and received.

Give your school counselor and teachers sufficient time to write your letter. If you ask them for a recommendation the day before it is due, the letter may not reflect their best effort. Give these individuals at least three weeks notice and make sure you provide them with all documents and information they need to submit the recommendation based on your school district's policies.

Be aware that if you are asked whether or not you waive your right to see the letters of recommendation, it is in your best interest to do so. Although it remains a personal decision, college admissions officials know whether or not you waived your right. They believe the letter is

a more authentic representation of who you are if you have waived your right to view it. This also shows that you have confidence in the writer's assessment of you.

Complete the optional sections, essays or questions as part of the application.

Be aware that it is in your best interest to submit your application earlier rather than later for admission, financial aid and scholarship purposes. Strictly adhere to any deadlines and do not wait until the last minute to submit your application. Applying earlier rather than later will give you the opportunity to make sure all documents, including those from your high school and testing organizations, are received by the deadline.

Make sure that your college essays reflect your strengths, talents and values. College admission officials use this aspect of your application to learn what is important to you and what has made an impact on you in your life so far. They seek to determine your values, opinions and personality traits as well as what you will contribute to their campus community. This essay should be written in your own voice and should reflect what you want them to know about you, not what you think they want to hear. This aspect of your application should reflect information that they cannot ascertain from other parts of your application or from those writing letters on your behalf.

Choose an appropriate email address for communication with college officials.

Make sure your privacy settings are appropriately set on your Internet accounts such as Facebook. College admissions officials have been known to check these accounts to gain a more comprehensive picture of you outside the school setting. Make sure you share information your grandmother would be proud of.

Make sure your college application and supplemental information has been received. You may be able to check your application status on-line. Make sure you check this site shortly after you apply to make sure your information, as well as those of your teachers and counselor, has been received. Make sure that your testing scores have been received as well. If you are unsure, contact the Admissions Office for direction.

DON'T:

Omit information or provide incorrect information on your application.

Forget to attach an activity resume to your application or send the document separately if that option is not available. Applications generally provide a limited space for you to share this information. If you have been active in school and community organizations, the extent of your involvement needs to be highlighted as part of your application. A well-crafted activity resume that showcases these contributions is an integral part of the application process. College

admissions officials want a student who can contribute to a well-rounded class and one who will become active on their college campus as well. Keep in mind, though, that if your activities take place primarily in senior year alone that will be noted.

Procrastinate and wait until the last minute to begin your essay(s) on the college application. It is an aspect of the process that takes much thought and revision.

Forget that if you are including a college specific essay with another application and have used a particular college name within your essay, do not send that essay to a different college without making a correction. This has happened on many occasions and it is not looked upon fondly. If you are reusing an essay, remember to keep it generic or change the college title used within the essay.

Write an essay on topics that have been overused such as: the death of a pet, breakup with a boyfriend/girlfriend or how you scored the goal in the big game. Seek an original topic and one that could apply to you in particular. Make your essay creative and well written.

Forget to have your essay proofread by an adult – parent, teacher or college consultant. You may want to print out your application before you submit and review a paper copy.

Forget to see if supplemental essays are required, particularly on the Common Application. Those essays carry as much weight as the essays on the general application.

Indulge in wild and strange antics such as baking a cake and having it delivered, sending a personal video or sending balloons to the admission office. These antics are not well received.

Send an email requesting information that can be found on the college website.

Be rude to admissions staff on the phone or via email.

Portray a picture of someone you are not. The admissions staff is looking for a student who is the right fit for their campus – you should be looking for this fit as well.

Forget to press the right buttons to make sure your application and supplemental sections have been submitted. Sending your payment may be a separate process and does not guarantee your application has been submitted.

Forget to investigate if additional scholarship or honors program applications are required.