

COLLEGE APPLICATION ORGANIZER

Based on Peterson's Application Organizer

An important step in the college selection process is completing an application. Most applications require biographical information, educational history, activity and work summaries, and one or more short essays. In addition to the application, colleges may require a copy of your transcript, results of standardized tests, recommendations by your teachers and counselor, and sometimes samples of your school work.

Writing the Application

Your college application is a reflection of who you are and what you have accomplished. It is your opportunity to present yourself as you would like others to see you. Don't underestimate the significance of your responses to the questions. Use your best effort, pay attention to the details, and be conscious of good grammar, proper mechanics, correct spelling and neatness.

Tips

Here are some pointers on completing your applications:

- Make copies of the original applications. Use the copies as worksheets and work on them until you are satisfied with your answers. Then transfer them to the original.
- Prepare a separate folder for each application with key dates and information noted on the outside. Make sure you have all the forms required. Keep a copy of everything you send to each college.
- Investigate using an electronic application to submit your application. Many colleges encourage students to complete their applications online.
- Know why you are applying to each school. Application fees can range from \$5 to over \$50. Five or six applications could add up to hundreds of dollars. Use a college search program or college guide to identify colleges that meet your needs and interests.
- Read the application instructions carefully and follow each to the letter.
- Don't wait until the day before the deadline to prepare the application. The application is a reflection of you. Take pride in its authorship.
- Be honest when identifying your extracurricular activities. Colleges want to build a class composed of people with diverse talents and interests. It is better to demonstrate actual involvement in a few activities than a minimal involvement in many.
- Include a picture of yourself, if requested. It personalizes the application.
- Present the admission committee with information that "paints a picture of you."
- Have someone proofread your work. Critique your application as if you were the admission officer.
- Ask your guidance counselor for help if you need it.
- Submit supplementary materials if required, such as writing samples or art work.
- Arrange for your official transcripts and test scores to be sent to each college.
- Ask for recommendations far enough in advance to give the writers plenty of time to prepare. Offer to meet with them or provide a written overview of your academics, interests and goals. Send a thank-you note. Provide addressed and stamped envelopes.
- Be sure to document any special circumstances such as a learning disability, special talent, illness or a unique family situation.
- Make copies of each completed application.

The Essay

Essays include such topics as a personal experience; reaction to a book, work of art, or historical figure; why you are interested in a particular field of study; or your insights about an issue or event. Whatever the topic, you should strive to project “you” through your writing. Personalize it so that it becomes an interview on paper. Write, rewrite and write again until your essay truly reflects you as a person. Try to discuss what sets you apart from other applicants, but don’t stray from the topic.

- Do not repeat information presented in other parts of the application.
- Use specific examples from your own experience and avoid generalizations. Depth is more important than breadth.
- Be honest.
- Be yourself.
- Choose the style you would like to use for your essay. Prose? Poetry?
- Write a draft and then put it aside for at least a day. Read it again and ask yourself if it creates the desired image.
- Have someone you respect read it and comment honestly on it.
- Read the essay aloud to hear how it sounds.
- Proofread it (check grammar and spelling) and rewrite if necessary.

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