

College Application Process

The process for applying for college admissions varies from one college to another. The first thing to do is **decide on the areas of study that you are interested in**, THEN search for the colleges that offer those courses of study (wanting to go to “XYZ-U” is great, but base your college choice on **WHAT** you want a degree in, **NOT** what institution that you think has a great football team; many colleges may offer better tuition rates and have a better track record in that field of study!). It is possible to apply online to most colleges using The Common Application For Texas State Colleges (found at www.applytexas.org). It is the **applicant’s responsibility** to know the steps to follow for a particular school. Simply stated, applying means sending an application form, high school records, and entrance exam scores to the college. **It is the sequence, forms and deadlines that vary.** To begin the application process, you must first request an application, though most institutions offer an online application. Check in the Student Services Office, Library, the transition or senior academic counselor for catalogues from specific colleges, or how to get an application online.

How to get the Application

- Most colleges will send an application to you upon request, though most offer an online application option. Through just about any search engine on the internet, you can very easily find their application. Key words are “admissions” or “incoming freshmen.”
- Some colleges will send an application or a “data” form only upon receipt of your ACT or SAT scores from the appropriate testing service (such as the University of Texas).
- Do your homework! The “online application process” is the most common today. Watch for deadlines for submissions on each website. Early submission dates vary, though it is not uncommon to have a date as early as late November of your senior year. On most college websites, you can change the information (after obtaining a PIN number), but **DON’T FORGET** to “submit” the application once you are satisfied with its content.

Completing the Forms

- Be sure to follow directions very carefully.
- Complete the application forms accurately and completely. **PRINT NEATLY.** A typed application is easier to read if you are using a conventional typewriter and a paper application.
- **Consistently** use your full legal name and social security number wherever asked.
- Read each question carefully. **Do not leave anything blank.** If a question does not apply to you, write “does not apply” or “N/A”.
- Spend considerable time on essays and statements (consult your English teacher and counselor). This is your chance to shine, and to show your creativity and uniqueness. If an institution lists an essay or additional essay as “optional,” do one! They want to know everything that they can about you and your work in high school, and often, this is the only way.
- Typing is preferable to hand writing, always.
- Individual Community Service is more impressive than group, though ANY community service work since your freshman year should be documented.

- **Always be truthful on an application of any kind.** Do not try to over-compensate for a weakness by inflating activities or leadership roles. **IT WILL COME BACK TO HAUNT YOU!!!**
- Set up a file system. Use a CD or a thumb drive, but keep this information! Remember, you have to apply for jobs after all this is over. You'll be glad you kept it.
- Distribute the appropriate parts of your application to the right people at least two weeks prior to the deadline.
- You may want to make a copy of the application (make a "rough draft" copy) and then copy the answers onto the ORIGINAL application form once you have decided it is to your satisfaction. This may save you from having to send for another application (with online applications, just hit "print" once you have filled all of the information out BEFORE submitting it. Check it for errors, especially spelling and grammar).
- **Make copies of ALL completed forms.**
- Be sure to mail all forms by the deadlines. **Deadlines for application is date of receipt, NOT when it is postmarked.** Colleges **do not accept "late work!"**
- **Do not apply for early decision at more than one college.**

Requests for Transcript

- Request for copies of a student's transcript should be made through the Registrar's Office.
- Each copy costs \$4.00 and will take 24 hours to process. College and scholarship applications usually require an OFFICIAL copy of a transcript. Read this next part VERY carefully! **An official copy carries a special seal and signature by the registrar. Many colleges require that this transcript be sealed in an envelope BY the registrar and stamped over the seal BY the registrar in order to be official. Check with each college on their requirements, but an official transcript in a sealed envelope prepared BY the registrar can avoid delays.** The transcript should stay in the envelope to be mailed on to its final destination. Always request an official transcript for your own records, though a copy of this is NOT considered an official copy.
- In some cases, the transcript will accompany the counselor recommendation form, but make sure this is the case. Don't assume.
- Instructions from the college should be read VERY carefully regarding transcripts. Remember, this is your official academic history of what you have accomplished while in high school!
- Please remember the high volume of requests made daily from the registrar's office and make transcript requests well in advance of the necessary date. (at least 2 weeks)
- Selected colleges require a transcript of second semester work. **The most important transcript is the final one.** DON'T slack off after Spring Break as the college who may have accepted you may now look at decreasing grades and **CAN** reject your acceptance to their institution!

Essays

- The purpose of the essay is important for two reasons:
 1. It enables an admissions office to evaluate your communication ability.

2. It enables an admissions office to learn more about you as a person beyond your test scores (if you are an “average” student with “average” grades, this is the part of the application that you need to really focus on. Don’t discount anything that you have overcome, or anything that you have done to help others).
- Be sure to follow resume form – Don’t free lance.
 - Be specific – do not let the reader assume anything. Treat this as a major employer walking down the street. What would you want to tell them? **SELL** them on why they **NEED** you. What do **YOU** have to offer **THEIR** institution? How can you benefit **THEM**? Sell yourself, no matter what your deficits might be.
 - Look up every word you do not know how to spell. Don’t depend on spell check! Have a few people proof read it before submitting.
 - Be articulate. Express what you have been through (accomplishments, adversity, personality traits, etc.)
 - **DON’T** be modest, but don’t be cocky either.
 - Use your Senior English teachers to help you! Often, college application essays are part of their curriculum. Take advantage of their expertise in this area!
 - Lastly, don’t overstate your capabilities, but don’t understate them either. Put yourself in the driver’s seat. If **YOU** were a college admissions specialist looking for a **GREAT** candidate for your college, what would **YOU** look for? Your essay(s) should take the most time of all of your application parts. Be sure to make it clear who you are and why **XYZ** college should accept you!

Applying for Housing

- Since many colleges require on-campus living for freshman students, it is important to know the procedure for housing arrangements at the school of your choice.
- An application form and a deposit are usually required to reserve housing.
- Write to the “Housing Office” for the proper forms and other information.
- Some colleges only accept housing applications from students who have been accepted for admission.
- Other universities have specific early deadlines. Check the college catalog carefully!
- Many colleges have housing shortages. **APPLY EARLY.**

Looking for Financial Aid

- Once again, each school must be contacted.
- Check the section in this booklet, “Financial Aid”.
- The necessary financial forms will have their own deadlines. Be careful.
- Many schools will not award financial aid until a student has been accepted.
- Be sure you make a note of the financial aid officer’s name with whom you talk.
- Scholarship information can be obtained from the college of your choice.
- For local scholarships check the file located in Student Services for copies of applications.
- Select by early fall of your senior year, colleges or universities in which you are seriously interested and to which you are likely to be accepted. **DO NOT** limit your choices only to those schools you can afford. Financial aid can and often does make it possible for students to have a chance for a choice of schools.
- Write or visit the college offices of admissions for admission and financial aid application information.
- Carefully complete and return by the schools’ suggested filing dates any required school financial aid applications.
- Determine which family financial information form the schools require. Your high school counselor or the college admissions and financial aid offices can tell you.
- Investigate any scholarship or loan programs which may be offered through your church, your parents’ employers or civic organizations.
- Research at your school library financial aid source information.
- Stay in contact with the financial aid offices of the schools to which you are applying. Respond quickly to all requests for additional information. Usually by completing the school’s financial aid application and one of the family financial information forms you will be considered by the college financial aid office and all aid programs administered by the school, including scholarships, grants, student loans and part-time employment. However, at some schools it may be necessary to contact separately the academic department of your major field of study.

Awaiting an Acceptance

- Once you have made copies of all forms and mailed all papers, you may sit back and wait.
- Some colleges have “rolling” admissions, and you may hear a response in four to six weeks.
- Some colleges have a notification date (i.e. April 15). Again, check your college information bulletin.
- You should respond to the school of your choice by May 1st.

