

Common App Tips

PROFILE

Do I qualify for a fee waiver?

If you are from a low-income family, you live in public housing, you are on a reduced tuition scholarship program, or you are a ward of the state or a foster child then you probably qualify. This is not a coupon code, so only mark this if the criteria apply to you, because I have to verify it on your behalf.

What is my citizenship status?

If you were born in the US, you are a US citizen. Some students may be dual citizens (ask your parents if you have lived in other countries but aren't sure if you have citizenship in those countries). You are a resident or citizen of another country if you are studying in a US school on an international VISA.

FAMILY

Parent information

You will probably need to ask your parent(s) about their post-secondary education. Did they attend college? Which one or multiple? What did they earn their degree in? What year did they finish their degree?

EDUCATION

Date of Entry = the year you started at OCS

Graduation date = May 21, 2027

Number in graduating class = 36

Class Rank = None

GPA scale = 4.0

Report your weighted GPA if you have one. Check your transcript or Naviance - I already updated them for you!

Make sure the names of classes you list match your transcript and the full course name (Example: British Literature, not Brit Lit... Statistics, not Stats... AP Language and Composition, not AP Lang)

Start date - Fall 2027 (put this even if you intend to do a gap year or semester)

Pick a major/course of study. It's not binding, they just want to know what you're thinking right now.

ACTIVITIES and HONORS

How do I know what to put? Does the order matter? What if I have too many to list? Which ones make me look best?

You don't need to worry about ranking past the top 3 things. Choose the most recent, highest impact things to list here. What was most important to you? What activities have had the most impact on you? Where have you contributed the most? Use strong VERBS to demonstrate involvement.

The idea is to show what you value by telling schools how you have spent your time. What have shown commitment to? Part time job, caretaker for younger siblings or aging relative, helping with family business. Schools value commitment and quality over a lengthy scattered list.

ESSAY

Do I have to write an essay? What do I write about?

Yes, you should write and submit an essay. Everything else on your application has been data, numbers, checkboxes, and lists. Your essay makes you a person. Tell HOW all the things you have done in school have helped you grow or how your activities gave you a chance to impact others. How will your experiences and the lessons you've learned help you in your future? What traits have you developed that you will use to make a difference?

FERPA

What is this???

Please sign the FERPA waiver by selecting any college dropdown on the leftside menu and clicking on the FERPA tab. You are giving me rights to submit your confidential information on your behalf (your transcript, your classes, etc) and waiving the right to read your letters of recommendation. If you do not do this, schools may suspect that you may have tampered with the documents or attempted to manipulate some part of the process in your favor.

Note on test scores and discipline records

SAT - I do not submit test scores for SAT. You do so through your College Board account if you want to. Some school will say “we are missing your test scores!” because they want you to submit even if the scores are optional. Double check the requirements and decide if you’re sharing or not. In general, you should submit your scores. See me if you want help! [SAT test date at OCS was March 25th, 2026.](#)

Discipline records - If you have major infractions on file (such as suspension), you should disclose them along with an explanation of the incident showing what you have learned and how you have changed as a result. These infractions do not usually bar you from being admitted, but lying on your application by refusing to disclose information most likely would. I WILL HELP YOU write your explanation if you want.

Transcripts and Letters of recommendation

Transcripts - Use Naviance to request transcripts. You can see if I’ve submitted them, and I can see with a timestamp when schools download your info! Sometimes there is a delay in matching your data with your application, so be patient! You are welcome to check with me if you get emails from a school saying they are missing your info.

Letters - Ask in person first, to their face!! Some teachers are asked to write A LOT of letters, and I would rather them tell you no than resort to using form letters for everyone or using AI instead of writing you a personalized letter. Once you have a yes, submit the formal request through Naviance. Their letter will get submitted electronically. You are welcome to ask for a copy but you won’t get one automatically or be able to see it on Naviance (only that it is or is not submitted)

Senior Brag Sheet

In your Class of 2027 folder. Make a copy in your google drive, fill out any sections that pertain to you, and share it with me. I will get this document to the teachers writing your letters and I use it to write mine! I’m already working on my letters, so please do this ASAP.

Free Application codes

Click here and scroll down to the search bar for confirmed codes:<https://www.applyingto.college/resources/fee-waivers>

You can search for more MI schools here:

<https://sites.google.com/micollegeaccess.org/cavacollegeguide/home>

Always Free

Adrian College	Hope College	University of Detroit Mercy
Albion College	Kettering University	University of Michigan-Dearborn
Alma College	Kuyper College	University of Olivet
Aquinas College	Michigan Technological University	
College for Creative Studies	Northwood University	
Cornerstone University	OCC and Oakland University	
Ferris State University	Rochester Christian University	
Grace Christian University	Saginaw Valley State	
Great Lakes Christian College	Spring Arbor University	
Hillsdale College		

*****Already applied?*****

Please decorate a flag! I'll hang it on my bulletin board and post your picture to Schoology (with your permission).