Getting Started with the Common App

1. Go to www.commonapp.org and create an account

2. In the future, when you logon, be sure the Applicant tab is highlighted when you do so.
This is the page you see when you login for the first time. I suggest you get started by first completing the first three sections of the Common App.

Click on the Common Application tab to begin.
Use the navigation on the left to complete each section.

Information entered on the Common App tab is given to every college you apply to using the Common App.

The subsequent screenshots show examples of how to complete the Profile section of the Common App.
Country of birth
United States of America

City of birth
San Francisco

State/Province of birth
California

Number of years you have lived in the United States
17

Number of years you have lived outside the United States
0

Number of languages you are proficient in
2

Select language
German, Standard

Language proficiency
First Language, Speak, Spoken at Home

Select language
English

Language proficiency
Speak, Read, Write, Spoken at Home
Select your citizenship status
U.S. Citizen or U.S. National

Social Security Number, required if applying for financial aid via FAFSA.

Edit Back Continue
When each section is complete, a green check mark will appear and move to the screen to the next section to be completed.
Parent 2 type:* 
Father 

Is parent 2 living?* 
Yes 

Prefix* 
Mr. 

First/Given name* 
Ray 

Middle initial 

Last/Family/Surname* 
Bueller 

Suffix 

Country of birth 
Italy 

Preferred email 

Preferred phone 

Preferred phone number 

Parent 2 address is* 

Please specify number of siblings you have* 
2 

First/Given name* 
Matha 

Middle initial 

Last/Family/Surname* 
Johnson 

Age 

Relationship* 
Sister 

Grade/Education level* 
College 

Degree earned or expected 
Select 

College lookup 
San Jose State University 
One Washington Square 
San Jose, CA 95192
School lookup
Palo Alto Senior High School
50 Embarcadero Rd
Palo Alto, CA 94301-2379
USA
Public
CEEB Code: 052350

Date of entry
08/2010

Is this a boarding school?
No

Graduation date
05/26/2014

Counselor's prefix
Mr.

Counselor's first name
Jake

Counselor's middle initial

Counselor's last name
Ryan

Counselor's title
Teacher Advisor

Counselor's email
jryan@pausd.org

Counselor's phone
+1.650.329.3813
If you have attended any other schools, please indicate number of schools*
1

School 2 lookup*
Menlo Atherton High School
555 Middlefield Rd
Atherton, CA 94027-3484
USA
Public
CEEB Code: 050170

School 2 from date*
01/2011

School 2 to date*
06/2011

Common Application
Profile
Family
Education
Testing
Activities
Writing

Dashboard | My Colleges | Common App | College Search

Education Interruption
If your progression through secondary school was or will be delayed or interrupted in any way, please check all that apply
did or will take gap year
If you have taken a college/university course beginning with 9th grade, please indicate number of colleges:

1

College 1 lookup:
Foothill College
12345 El Monte Road
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022
USA
2-year or community college
CEEB Code: 4315

Course details
Course taught on college campus

College 1 from date:
06/2013

College 1 to date:
07/2013

Degree earned:

CBO

Indicate the number of community programs or organizations that have provided you with free assistance in your application process:

1

Organization 1:
Other

Specify other organization:
Foundation for College Education

Counselor's organization:
Other

Specify other organization:
Foundation for College Education

Counselor's prefix:
Ms.

Counselor's first name:
Andie

Counselor's middle initial:

Counselor's last name:
Walsh

Counselor's title:
Director
Paly does not rank students.

The Paly class of 2014 has 471 students.

Your Cumulative GPA is the District Unweighted GPA printed on your transcript (you received a copy of your transcript in Advisory).

Paly uses a 4 point grade scale.

Paly’s GPA is unweighted.
How many courses would you like to report? 6

Course 1 title*
AP English

Course 1 level, if applicable
- Accelerated
- Advanced Placement (AP)
- Honors
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Regents

Course 1 credit value*
10

Course 1 schedule*
- Full Year
- First Semester
- First Trimester
- Second Semester
- Second Trimester
- Third Trimester

Course 2 title*
Economics

Course 2 level, if applicable
- Accelerated
- Advanced Placement (AP)
- Honors
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Regents

Course 2 credit value*
5

Course 2 schedule*
- Full Year
- First Semester
- First Trimester
- Second Semester
- Second Trimester
- Third Trimester
If you have received any honors beginning with the ninth grade or international equivalent, please indicate number of honors
1

Honors 1 title
The President’s Volunteer Service Award

Grade level
11

Highest level of recognition
National
Once you complete the Education section and see the green checkmark, you can invite and assign recommenders.

I suggest you stop working on the Common App tab at this point and instead use the College Search tab to add colleges to your Dashboard.

Please refer to this url for how to do search for colleges and add them to your Dashboard: https://www.commonapp.org/eLearning/Managing_Your_CA.htm

Your Dashboard is a table summary of the colleges you’ll apply to with deadlines and indicators to track when you submit each application and supplement.

Expand the triangle to see a detailed view of application requirements.
The My Colleges tab lists each college from your Dashboard. Click on the college name to find details about which additional questions you must answer for each college, preview how many letters of recommendation are required and allowed—then invite and assign your recommenders for each college—as well as any writing supplement each college requires.

Once you complete the Questions section for a college, you will see a green check.
If you try to Invite and Assign Recommenders before completing the Education section on the Common App tab, you will see this error screen!

We need to know more about your Education, including your secondary school and counselor before we can help you invite and assign the right recommenders.

Please complete the Education screen of the Common App.
Before you can Invite and Assign Recommenders, you must complete the Federal Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) questions.
We recommend you authorize your schools and colleges to release and share records.

We highly recommend you waive your right to access your recommendations and other documents being sent from Paly. Doing so gives the colleges confidence that you trust your recommenders to write honest assessments. Teachers and colleges pay close attention to how you respond to this question.

IMPORTANT WARNING!

Update waiver of access (FERPA)

As long as your counselor or any teacher hasn't submitted a school form on your behalf, you can change your waiver response by returning to the Recommendation section and deleting each school official currently listed. Once you have deleted all school officials from your account, you will be able to change your response in the Release Authorization. After you have indicated your response, click Save, and then re-invite your school officials. Please reach out to your teachers and your counselor to advise them they will receive new login information.

If any one of your recommenders has submitted a form on your behalf, you will not be able to change your waiver response. In addition, the Support Team cannot make this update for you.
Click on the Invite Counselor link to proceed to invite your Teacher Advisor to write and submit the School Report and upload his/her letter as well as your transcript to the Common App. Remember there is no fee for Common App transcripts and nothing more you need to do to ensure they will be sent to your college(s).
Click on the Invite Teacher link to proceed to **invite** a teacher to complete the Teacher Evaluation form and upload his/her recommendation letter to the Common App.
After Inviting your teacher as a Recommender, you must now Assign him/her to each college you want his/her Teacher Evaluation form and recommendation letter sent to.
If your teacher prefers to mail in his/her Teacher Evaluation form and letter to each college, rather than uploading them to the Common App, you will see this warning. Click the Offline Form link to print the Teacher Evaluation form.

Print this form. Complete the Contact section (top portion) of the form. Address a business-sized envelope to the college and add a stamp. Give the form and addressed, stamped envelope to your Teacher for mailing. Do so for each of your colleges.
If you want to invite other recommenders, later, you can do so by click on the Manage Recommenders link.
Click on each college to assign recommenders to all of your colleges.

You must invite and assign recommenders for your colleges by the Paly deadline! For more information, see the College Application Summary:
http://www.paly.net/sites/default/files/Collegeappprocesssumm13Updated.pdf
Essay

• Write your essay in a Word processing program and cut and paste it into the Common App

• **Warning about trying to copy essays into Common App from Microsoft Word.** In this new release of the Common App many students report that the essays seem to transfer over smoothly, but when they Preview the essay, they see blank spaces, missing lines, or computer code that turns some (or all) of their essay into hieroglyphics.

• The easiest “cure” that’s been discovered so far is for students to Copy their Microsoft Word essays into Notepad, the very basic word processing program that comes on most PCs. Once it’s pasted into Notepad, the computer code from Word is cleaned off; students then hit Copy from Notepad and paste into Common App, and everything is fine. Common App will undoubtedly come up with a better fix, but for now, that’s the best thing to do.
Submitting Your Common App to Each College and Paying

• After you complete the Common App and college supplements, you submit each to each college, in two separate steps
• You can verify the status of submission of each/both and the application fee payment
• Review this flowchart that explains how to do this:
  https://www.commonapp.org/eLearning/Submission.htm