

Frequently Asked Questions about Applying to College

1. How can I give myself the best advantage in the college application process?

A student gains the biggest advantage by **applying early** (August or September), by doing an excellent job on the application and essays, and by completing the optional items. Because the work for the application can take 15-20 hours, starting early is recommended. In addition, be sure to research the admissions requirements of your college choices.

2. How do I apply?

Most Texas colleges and universities have students apply online through Apply Texas at www.applytexas.org. Students may set up an account any time during their junior or senior year of high school. Some schools allow you to apply for scholarships along with your admissions application. Any required essays can be pasted onto the application also. Once you have completed one application, the information may be copied over to other school applications. Some private and out-of-state schools prefer you to apply online at their websites. Some Texas and out-of-state colleges want students to use the Common Application at www.commonapp.org.

3. How do colleges decide on which applicants to accept?

All Texas colleges and universities must automatically accept students ranking in the top 10% of their graduating class. UT has an exception and will accept the top 8%. Many universities also have an SAT or ACT score for which they consider students as qualified for automatic acceptance. That score varies from school to school. All other applicants go through a review process and the universities take a holistic look at the student in making the admission decision.

4. Why does MCA not rank its students?

Most private high schools do not rank. It is MCA's goal that students achieve a set standard, and not have their performances judged by comparison to others. Therefore, most MCA students will be review candidates unless their test scores qualify for automatic acceptance.

5. What do the colleges and universities consider in the review process?

- SAT or ACT scores sent from the test center
- Grades - official school transcript
- Information on the college application and extra documentation you submit:
 - Extra-Curricular Activities
 - Leadership
 - Service
 - Awards
 - Jobs or summer activities
 - Optional things like academic resume, letters of recommendation, optional essays, copies of award certificates, news articles and any other important information you would like them to know.

6. Do MCA graduates get into the colleges of their choice?

Most graduates get into their first or second choice college or university. Of course, some colleges are more selective than others and students must meet the requirements set by those schools. See the recommended timeline for applying to selective colleges. The MCA

School Profile has a list of schools to which MCA graduates have been accepted.

7. Which test should I take, the SAT or ACT?

Take both at least once. When you determine which one you do better on, continue taking that test. Most colleges will accept either test. But each college sets its own policy for how it uses multiple scores: some colleges require all your scores, some colleges look at your highest combined scores from one test date, and some colleges accept your highest section scores from any day you tested. Research the requirements for your chosen schools. Most colleges and universities require incoming freshmen to take one of them. Your scores must be sent directly from the test center. However, many schools do not require transfer sophomores or juniors to take these tests.

Note: many students find their test scores increase the more they take the test. Reviewing algebra may help improve SAT math scores. Algebra II is the highest math covered on the SAT.

8. How do I sign up for the SAT or ACT.

Each student must register online for both tests. You will create an account and select colleges to send your scores to. The SAT website is www.collegeboard.com. The ACT website is www.actstudent.org. You will also select a test site. Midland College and Odessa College are the closest test sites. These websites also have sample test questions every day. Students can gain an advantage in understanding the directions, the style of questions and comfort with the test taking process by taking time to answer these questions often.

MCA offers the SAT on campus during the spring semester for Juniors and Seniors. If you elect to take the school-site SAT, you will sign up with MCA and not with College Board.

9. When should I start taking these tests?

Students should start taking the tests during the junior year and continue into the fall of their senior year. Take the test as many times as feasible.

10. If I can't start the application until August or September, how can I start early?

Students should review & update their MCA transcript at the end of their junior year with the Administrator. Similarly, they can create an academic resume during their junior year or the summer between the junior and senior years. By creating a thorough resume of their activities, service, awards and work experiences, they will be ready ahead of time to fill out the application when it is available. Students may call the colleges for the essay topics and have these written by the end of the summer. In addition, by asking for and getting letters of recommendation in the summer, a student would have everything necessary to fill out and submit the application as soon as it is available.

11. Do I really need to make a formal resume?

Creating a resume is highly recommended. It allows you to prioritize your activities in order of importance. You will have thought this out ahead of time and you will be able to fill out the application more quickly and well. On a resume you can go into more detail of exactly what you did in your activities. The application allows only for a limited number of activities described in limited space. You do not have these constraints with your resume. You may have more activities than will fit in the application. You should list these on your resume. Colleges will use the resume to garner more information about you. Sending in a resume can

only help you. See the resume form.

12. What should I know about the parts of the application?

Activities: List activities in order of importance. Include the time spent doing the activity (hrs/wk and wks/yr) including practicing, traveling and competing. Any activities at school or in the community during grades 9-12 may be included. For service activities, calculate the total time spent serving. Some common MCA activities are sports, American History Trip, Etiquette & Leadership Class (Discovering Greatness), High School Retreat, Mentor Group Leader (RT Leader), etc.

Awards: List awards received from grades 9-12. Indicate the number of people to receive the award if it helps you, i.e., Student Commendation Award, 1 or 3, award given to outstanding students who exemplify a love of learning and high academic standards. Some other possible awards are Master with Honor in ____, School Service Award, Character Award, Honor Roll, Honor Graduate, etc. Any awards received outside of school should be provided also. These might include Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, summer camp awards, community awards, theater, etc.

Essays: Apply Texas and Common App shows what essays are required by which colleges. When writing your essays, make sure you answer the question. Essays may be pasted onto the application. If you are a review candidate, it is recommended you do the optional essays.

Scholarship Application: Many Texas universities have a scholarship application as part of the admissions application.

Other colleges: Once you complete one application on Apply Texas or Common App, you may copy the information over to another application by going to your account. Most of the information will be prefilled, but you must save each page of the new application. You will also have to paste in your essays again for each application.

13. When should I visit colleges that I am interested in?

Visiting colleges is a good way to help students narrow down their choices of majors and what school to attend. Visiting campuses before you start applying simplifies the process and gives you a goal to work towards. The junior year seems to be the ideal time to do this.

14. After I submit my application, what else should I do?

Request a transcript from MCA to be sent to each college through [Parchment](#). MCA's High School Profile will automatically be sent with your transcript. If you apply to schools on Common App and put the MCA Administrator as the school counselor, your transcript will be uploaded directly to your Common App application.

You may mail or upload these optional documents to the schools you are applying to:

- Academic resume
- Letters of recommendation (2)
- Any other documentation you would like to send

The schools to which you have applied will allow you to follow the progress of your application on their website or the portal you used to apply. Check it often.

15. Once I have been accepted to a college, is there anything else I should know?

Yes, if you plan to live in a dorm on campus, most schools require that you take the bacterial meningitis vaccination before you can receive a dorm assignment.

There is also a Texas Success Initiative requirement to satisfy. The Texas Legislature has required colleges to determine that students are ready for college classes before they register. Some students are required to take the THEA or COMPASS tests to show readiness in reading and math. These tests may be taken at Midland College before you go to your college's orientation. *Students who make the following scores are **exempt** from these extra tests:*

	ACT	SAT
Composite/Combined	23	1070
Critical Reading	19	500
Math	19	500

16. Where can I look for scholarship applications:

You will be emailed throughout your senior year of various local scholarships available.

You may also try these websites:

www.pbaf.org

www.fastweb.com

www.Absolutelyscholarships.com

www.collegenet.com

www.scholarships.com

The Junior League of Midland also offers a scholarship clearinghouse.
Some companies offer scholarships for their employees' children.