

THE GREAT GUIDE TO COLLEGE

By: Lord Jupiter

Dear Reader,

I made this book to guide you on your way to college, from here (Ethiopia) all the way to the doorsteps of whatever institute you want to go to. I wrote this because I've been in your shoes and I know how confusing and stressful college applications can be. That and I just always seem to have too much time on my hands. I made this book based on my personal experiences and some research. I can't be certain that I will be able to answer all your questions, but I will try to answer as many as I possibly can. I can't say I'm an expert writer; however I will try to make this as detailed and informative as possible. With all that said I want to say good luck to all you future scholars and without further ado The Great Guide to College!

P.S: I will be converting all currencies to USD. Most of the things I mention can only be paid for through foreign credit cards or bank accounts (MasterCard, Visa, PayPal) so if you are not able to acquire one, you will not be able to do this. Sorry.

Glossary

1. The Checklist
2. Testing
3. The Common App
4. Private College Application Pages
5. Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Student Loans
6. Other Things You Might Have to Know
7. Summary

The Checklist

This section is just a list of things you will need and why you need them.

- **A Passport** - to use as an identification method when you register for tests and when you apply for a visa. This is **ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY!** (Required)
- **A Counselor** - to have your school records submitted on your behalf. Colleges won't accept your transcript and other documents if you submit them yourself. Ask your school if they have a counselor employed. If not you can ask the counselor of a school that does or employ one. (Required)
- **Your transcript** - to be able to proceed with the application. You can't apply without your transcript. You can acquire your transcript without finishing 12th grade. All you have to do is ask the school for a copy. (Required)
- **Foreign Credit Card/PayPal** - to be able to pay for tests and application fees. If you don't have one, ask a relative with a credit card to pay on your behalf. (Required)
- **At least two letters of recommendation from teachers** - this one isn't necessary for all college applications but most colleges require at least two recommenders while some don't require any. (Circumstantial)
- **Proof of Financial Support** - again this isn't required by all colleges but most of them require it. This is just evidence to show that even without aid or scholarships; you will be able to pay for a least one year of tuition. This can be shown by filling out a form after you apply and attaching a bank statement showing all available funds for proof. (Circumstantial)

Testing

I. College Eligibility Tests

In this sub-chapter I will be covering all the options you have in terms of college eligibility testing. The most commonly used college eligibility tests would have to be the ACT and the SAT, both of which can be taken in Addis Ababa. One of either one of these test is usually required to be able to apply to college. Your results in these tests heavily impact your admission chance, so I advise you to study well before taking these tests. You will be able to register for the tests online. I will provide links to the websites of tests and resources I mention from now onwards at the end of this chapter. Let's begin with an assessment of the ACT.

ACT (American College Test)

The ACT is an entrance exam used by most colleges in the US and other countries as well. It is used to assess college readiness. It's a multiple-choice test that is done by a pencil, much like our national exams. The subjects that will be in the ACT are Math, English, Science, Reading, and Writing (optional). The price ranges from 150\$-166\$ depending on whether you want the optional essay writing section or not. I'll let you read about the details on your own, once you decide on a test to take. I don't recommend the ACT for social science students as it includes science (Chemistry, Physics, Geology, etc...).

SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)

The SAT is very similar to the ACT in description. What sets it apart from the ACT is the content in the test and the scoring system. The SAT consists of Math, Reading, and Essay writing (optional). The price ranges from 95\$-111\$ depending on whether you want the optional writing section or not.

Summary

Both these tests can be used for college applications and both are usually seen more or less equally. So how do you decide on which test to take? As I mentioned before, I wouldn't recommend the ACT to social science students, but that aside I think the best way to decide is to take a good amount of practice tests for each and decide based on the scores you get. Choose the test that suited you better. Even though the grading scale is different some websites give you a scale that compares both and I will provide a link later. The best time to take these tests would be at the end of your junior year (11th grade) or the very beginning of your senior year (12th grade).

Links for Sub-chapter I

ACT Registration

<http://www.act.org/the-act/registration>

SAT Registration

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>

SAT-ACT Score Scale

<https://www.studypoint.com/ed/sat-act-concordance/>

II. Other Tests

This sub-chapter will be covering the other tests there are that are also important to college, but may or may not be required. Due to the recent pandemic, a lot of colleges have become test-optional meaning that they dropped the mandatory requirement for ACT/SAT and made it optional. However, they still require English proficiency tests. We will see what those are and other tests that you may require in some circumstances.

English Proficiency Tests

An English proficiency test is a test that assesses your knowledge of the English language. It doesn't consist of anything, except for English. The SAT and ACT can be used as an English Proficiency Test, however if your plans to take the SAT or ACT were derailed by the pandemic, worry not. Most colleges have adopted a test-optional policy and instead require only an English proficiency test. This is because of the simplicity of taking an English proficiency test. Out of the three I will be mentioning here, two are available to take online. The three tests are the TOEFL 200\$, the IELTS 231\$, and the Duolingo English Test 50\$ (DET). The IELTS is offered on paper only. The TOEFL is offered on paper and online. The DET is offered only online. Let's go through the pros and cons now. TOEFL and IELTS are widely accepted throughout the world; however you can't take them whenever you want. Even the online version of the TOEFL requires an appointment which may take from a couple of weeks to months. The DET, on the other hand can be taken whenever you feel like it and the registration page lets you take as many practice tests as you want for free, however the DET is a new test that hasn't been accepted in a lot of colleges yet so you might find that your dream school doesn't accept it (also why it's way cheaper than the other two tests). The test sections are the same for all of them. In addition to reading and writing, there will also be a speaking and listening section where an examiner asks you questions and you reply. For the DET the speaking and listening part is conducted by speaking about a given topic and writing down what you listened to on the test (you only get to listen three times usually). Take practice tests and like before, chose the one you do better at. The DET website gives you a free score comparison scale.

SAT Subject Tests

The SAT Subject Tests are tests that are focused on only one subject of your choosing. You can take up to three on one testing day. It is used by students that have bad grades in one or more subjects. There are multiple subjects you can take including Math and History. I will not provide a link to this because it's on the same website as the SAT.

GED (General Education Diploma)

The GED is a substitute high school diploma for people that failed high school or dropped out. Since the entrance exams dictate whether someone finishes high school here or not, this test could prove useful to people that couldn't make it past that finish line. There are four subjects you are tested in. They are Math, Language Reasoning, Social Studies, and Science. I'm not sure if it's available here. The internet gave me vague answers. If it isn't available here, you can take it in a country that does. I saw somewhere that it isn't a requirement to be a citizen of the country you're taking it in. It is priced 300\$ to take all four subjects. Keep in mind this diploma only works in the US and Canada. It holds no value here.

Summary

These tests are not required to be taken. They are included just in case some of you are in the same set of circumstances.

Links for Sub-chapter II

TOEFL Registration

<https://www.ets.org/toefl>

IELTS Registration

<https://www.ielts.org/>

Duolingo English Test Registration

<https://englishtest.duolingo.com/>

GED

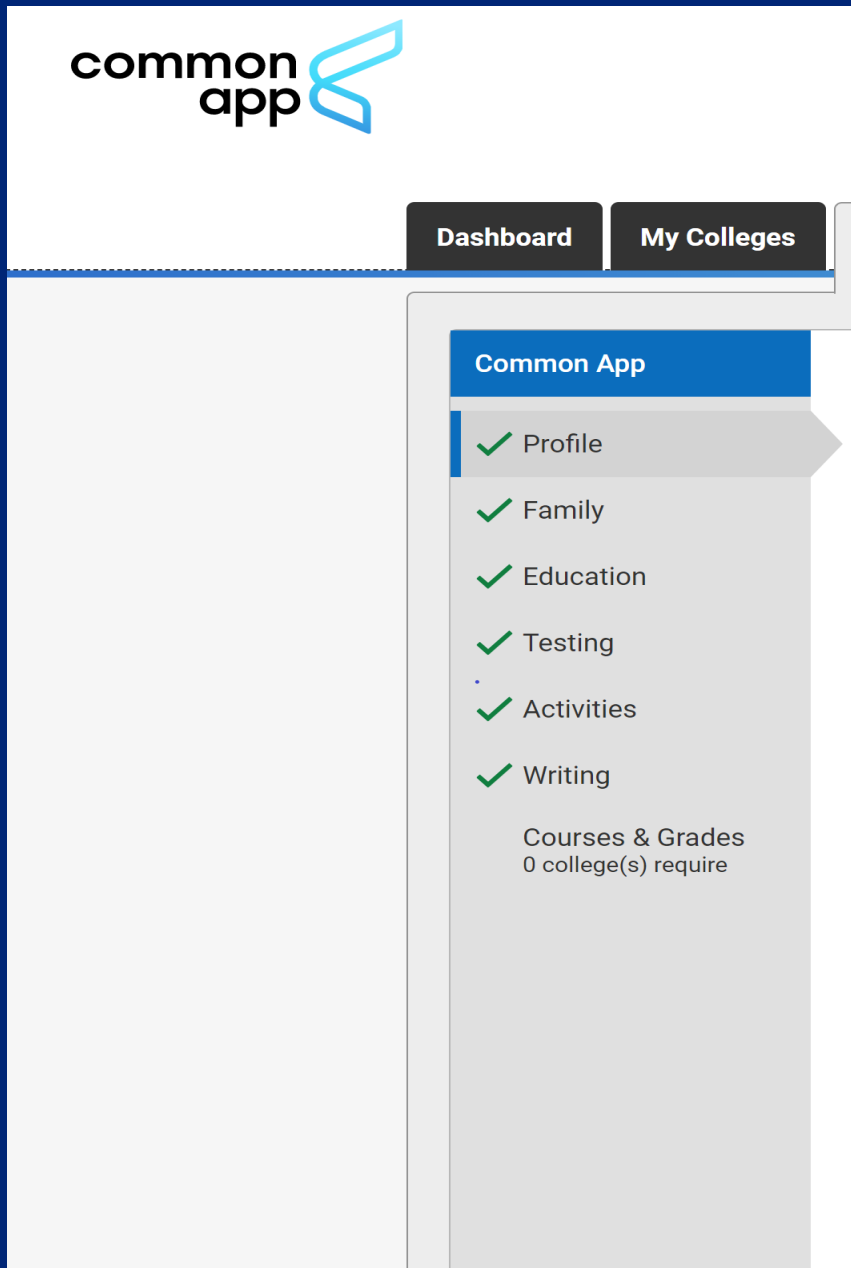
<https://ged.com/en/>

The Common App

I'm going to try to make this chapter short and sweet. I will skip the parts of the Common App that I think are easy to fill out like family and activities since the questions are self-explanatory. When you create your account, be sure to create it as an undergraduate student.

Link to Common App account sign up

<https://apply.commonapp.org/createaccount>



I. Profile

Your profile consists of your personal information.

Address

Since Ethiopian addresses can't be found, you will have to go through the following process.

! Permanent home address*

+ [Add address](#)

Please complete this required question.

Alternate mailing address (e.g. if you attend a boarding school or use a different mailing address)*

✕

Address Lookup

Country/Region/Territory*

Ethiopia ✕ ▾

Address*

eegsrtfsg

I don't see my address in this list

CancelContinue

Write some random letters then press “I don’t see my address in this list”

✕

Address Information

Country/Region/Territory*

Ethiopia ✕ ▾

Address Line 1 (Street Name and Number)*

Summit Road

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

City or Town*

Addis Ababa

State or Province

BackContinue

Fill in those two slots like I did and it should appear as such.

Address

Permanent home address*

Summit Road

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

 Change

 Remove

Next, answer “no” for the alternate mailing address unless you have family abroad. If you have family abroad answer “yes” and fill in the address. This is useless in the application process as they only send you useless mail and sometimes merchandise (mugs and t-shirts).

Demographics

The demographics part asks questions about your race and religion.

For the religion part, most Ethiopians would be either Christian or Muslim. For the Muslims, it’s an easy part to fill out due to the lack of denominations. As for Christians, it’s more difficult. If you see your denomination, just press it, but if you don’t just do this.

Demographics

Religious preference

Other  

Specify other religion or denomination

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Once you press “other”, another box will appear for you to specify your religion.

These are the rest of the questions.

U.S. Armed Forces status

☒ None

☐ Currently Serving

☐ Previously Served

☐ Current Dependent

Clear answer

Are you Hispanic or Latino/a/x?

☐ Yes

☒ No

Clear answer

Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please indicate how you identify yourself. (You may select one or more)

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian

☒ Black or African American

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ White

The Common App Fee-waiver

The common app fee waiver is an option for students that can't pay for the application fees of colleges. If you meet one of the conditions listed there, you will be able to apply to colleges without an application fee.

You must meet at least one of the following indicators of economic need to qualify for an application fee waiver. Select all that apply:*

☐ I have received or am eligible to receive an ACT or SAT testing fee waiver

☐ I am enrolled in or am eligible to participate in the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch program (FRPL)

☐ My annual family income falls within the Income Eligibility Guidelines set by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service

☐ I am enrolled in a federal, state, or local program that aids students from low-income families (e.g., TRIO programs such as Upward Bound)

☐ My family receives public assistance

☐ I live in federally subsidized public housing, a foster home or am homeless

☐ I am a ward of the state or an orphan

☒ I can provide a supporting statement from a school official, college access counselor, financial aid officer, or community leader

Unfortunately, most Ethiopians are eligible for one of these which is the one selected above. After this, it will ask you for a signature. Your signature is your name and last name (grandfather's name).

II. Education

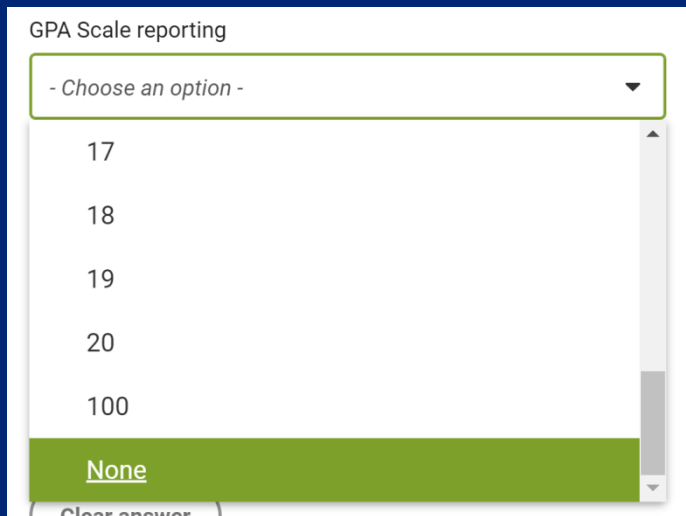
This section is all about your school and education.

Current or Most Recent Secondary/High School

The addresses of some schools are available on the Common App, but if you can't find your school, go through the same process in the "[Address](#)" section.

Grades

For the graduating class size, just give a good guess of how much it will be. If you already graduated (12th grade) then write the class size that is written on your transcript.



GPA Scale reporting

- Choose an option -

17

18

19

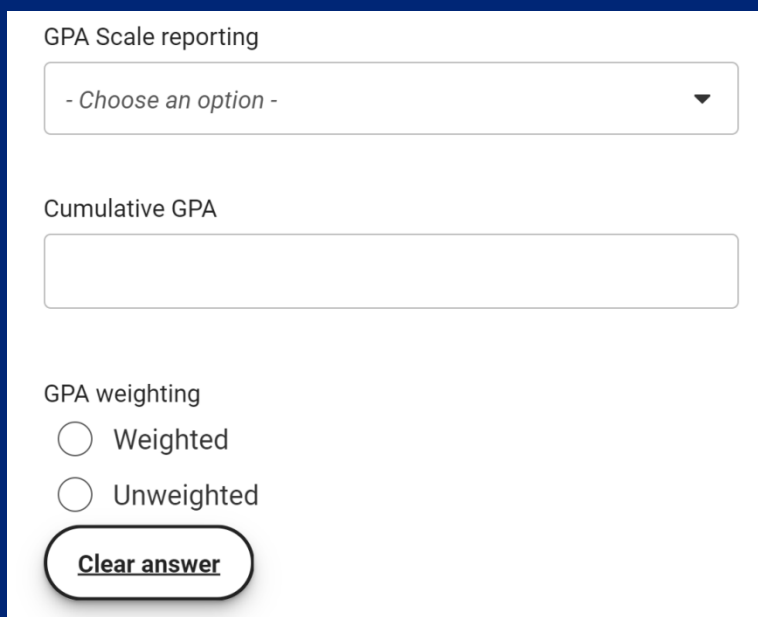
20

100

None

(Clear answer)

Choose none for the GPA scale reporting, since we don't use that in Ethiopia, then leave the "Cumulative GPA" and "GPA weighting" slots empty.



GPA Scale reporting

- Choose an option -

Cumulative GPA

GPA weighting

☐ Weighted

☐ Unweighted

Clear answer

Current or Most Recent Year Courses

Just list out every subject you took in the most recent or current school year. All courses are regular level in Ethiopia.

A screenshot of a web form for entering course information. It contains three course entries. The first entry is for 'Amharic'. The second entry is for 'Biology', with 'Course 1 level' set to 'Regular/Standard' and 'Course 1 schedule' set to 'Full Year'. The third entry is for 'Chemistry', also with 'Course 1 level' set to 'Regular/Standard' and 'Course 1 schedule' set to 'Full Year'. Each entry has a small 'X' icon and a dropdown arrow next to the level and schedule fields.

Honors

This part is all about the awards you have received both in and out of school from 9th-12th grade. If you do have awards, list them out here then scan all the certificates and send them to your counselor.

Testing

This is where you report about your tests. This part is common for all Ethiopians so I'm just going to provide pictures of what to do.

A screenshot of a form section titled 'International applicants:'. The text asks: 'Is promotion within your educational system based upon standard leaving examinations given at the end of lower and/or senior secondary school by a state or national leaving examinations board? (Students studying in the US typically answer no to this question.)'. There are two radio buttons: 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'. Below the radio buttons is a 'Clear answer' button.

The senior secondary leaving examinations are the 12th grade entrance exams. If you have taken it you will be asked questions about it. For those who have taken, it you will fill out the "Examination Board" slot as follows.

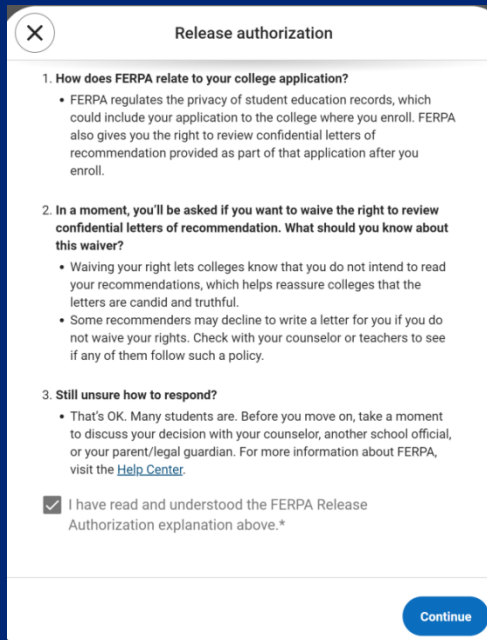
A screenshot of a form section titled 'Examination board*'. It has a dropdown menu with the text 'Other (specify below)' and a small 'X' icon and a dropdown arrow. Below this is a text input field with the text 'NEAEA'.

III. Courses and Grades

This section deals with your reported grades. For this section, you have to have your transcript on hand. This section is rarely required by colleges. Depending on your transcript the way you fill this out will be different, so I'm just going to provide some details. We don't have credits for subjects so put "N/A" in that slot. All our subjects are "Regular/Standard". That's all I can provide you with for this section. Good luck.

IV. FERPA

Once you choose your colleges and fill out the college-specific questions, this thing will appear before you.

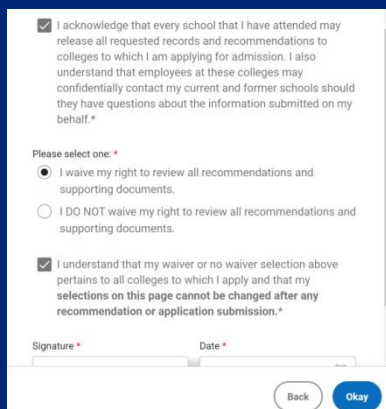


The screenshot shows a form titled "Release authorization" with a close button (X) in the top left. The form contains three numbered sections:

- 1. How does FERPA relate to your college application?**
 - FERPA regulates the privacy of student education records, which could include your application to the college where you enroll. FERPA also gives you the right to review confidential letters of recommendation provided as part of that application after you enroll.
- 2. In a moment, you'll be asked if you want to waive the right to review confidential letters of recommendation. What should you know about this waiver?**
 - Waiving your right lets colleges know that you do not intend to read your recommendations, which helps reassure colleges that the letters are candid and truthful.
 - Some recommenders may decline to write a letter for you if you do not waive your rights. Check with your counselor or teachers to see if any of them follow such a policy.
- 3. Still unsure how to respond?**
 - That's OK. Many students are. Before you move on, take a moment to discuss your decision with your counselor, another school official, or your parent/legal guardian. For more information about FERPA, visit the [Help Center](#).

At the bottom, there is a checkbox labeled "I have read and understood the FERPA Release Authorization explanation above.*" which is checked. A blue "Continue" button is in the bottom right corner.

This may seem complicated, but it's quite simple. What you are agreeing to is just to lose the right to view your recommendations from teachers, counselors, and others. By agreeing to this colleges will know that you haven't seen or tampered with the letters of recommendation or school documents. Even if you do happen to see the letters or school records, unless they have proof (your teacher snitching for example) nothing will come of it.



The screenshot shows a form with a checked checkbox at the top: "I acknowledge that every school that I have attended may release all requested records and recommendations to colleges to which I am applying for admission. I also understand that employees at these colleges may confidentially contact my current and former schools should they have questions about the information submitted on my behalf.*"

Below this is the instruction "Please select one: *" followed by two radio button options:

- ☒ I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents.
- ☐ I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents.

At the bottom, there is a checked checkbox: "I understand that my waiver or no waiver selection above pertains to all colleges to which I apply and that my selections on this page cannot be changed after any recommendation or application submission.*"

Below the checkbox are two input fields labeled "Signature *" and "Date *". At the very bottom are "Back" and "Okay" buttons.

Press "I waive my rights to review..." then check all the necessary boxes. Your signature is your first name and last name (grandfather's name). To invite recommenders you will need the email, first name, and last name of the person you want it from. They also have to be a teacher of a major subject like Math, Science or English.

Private College Application Pages

You might notice by now that some colleges aren't on the Common App. Some colleges prefer to use their own website for applications. These colleges have the same process for applying to them; however they do have a drawback. Since you can't invite your counselor or teachers here like in the Common App, your school will have to mail these documents themselves via post mail. There are courier services like DHL that can deliver it, but the overall process will be very tiresome. If you want to apply to such a school, you will have to discuss it with your school. The process usually involves downloading and printing out an application form from the webpage, then filling it out. There will be a form for teachers too so you will have to make them fill it out as well. The teacher will have to seal it in an envelope with the school stamp on the flap. Once this is all done you will have to put all the documents and envelopes in one big envelope and mail it to the college. Some colleges let you fill out the form online and have you mail only the school records and recommendations. That's all for this part.

Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Student Loans

In this section, we will be going over all the options you have to fund your tuition. If your parents are willing to pay for your tuition, there's no need for you to go over this chapter, but if you happen to be wondering where the heck you're going to find all that money for your tuition, well you have come to the right place.

I. Financial Aid

Financial aid is a sum of money that is discounted for people that can provide evidence that they have difficulty paying. For the majority of our country that shouldn't be a problem. There are special forms you have to fill out that are then sent to the institutes you are applying to. For us international students, there are two. They are the CSS and the ISFAA. The questions in these forms are self-explaining so I won't be covering how you fill them out. All colleges require one of these if you are applying for financial aid. Depending on the college you're applying to, you will be required to fill out one of these.

Links

IFSAA

<https://www.bates.edu/financial-services/files/2020/08/2021-22-International-Student-Financial-Aid-Application.pdf>

CSS

<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>

II. Scholarships

Scholarships come in many forms. They can come from the college itself or other institutions like banks or charities. Some scholarships offered by schools are only available once you apply to the college. I can only give you resources on where to find scholarship opportunities. Scholarships are usually awarded to students that stand out. My advice is to double down on extracurricular activities like charity work, clubs, and community service (and be sure to get certificates). Leadership roles in the extracurricular activities would be better. Of course, your academics matters as well, so don't forget to keep your grades up.

Resources

Text "1" to "6595" for an endless SMS subscription. I don't know if the subscription can be canceled so proceed at your own risk.

Look on the internet for websites and more resources.

III. Student Loans

A student loan is another great option to fund your time in college. Student loans are available to international students as well. A lot of banks offer them, but there's a catch. You have to have a co-signer in the country where the bank is based when you ask for a loan. This means that there has to be someone willing to risk themselves for you in that country. You can ask your family or someone you know to do it. If you fail to pay back the money within the given time, the co-signer will have to suffer the consequences. Another drawback is that you have to pay interest as well which can accumulate into a hefty sum for four years (assuming you don't work in college). I recommend you use this as a nuclear option.

Links

<https://www.mpowerfinancing.com/>

This isn't the only lender out there. You can look for more on the internet. I chose this one because it has fewer requirements.

Other Things You Might Have to Know

This final chapter is going to be a jumble of random things you might not know about college applications.

Admission Types

Regular Decision – means the regular time most applicants send their applications. Nothing special about this one.

Early Action – means that the application deadline is closer and the time you get your admission decision is closer as well.

Early Decision – this makes you sign a binding contract that if you get accepted at the college, you will have to attend it even if you got accepted at other colleges. You are only allowed to use this choice for one college only. Colleges keep in touch about early decision applicants so if you try to cheat you will be blacklisted, and so will your school. Meaning people coming from your school will have a lesser chance of acceptance. So don't screw around.

Rolling Admission – this means that the college serves on a first come first serve basis. There's a limited amount of seats and if you meet the standards you're in. This means that even if you have sky-high grades and an awesome resume, your chance of acceptance gets lower with every passing day. Apply early to these types of schools. The deadlines are usually in June or July and you get an admission decision in two to three weeks.

Tips

- Prepare your recommenders beforehand. It's a bad idea to rush in the final stages of the application.
- If you think your grades are bad and think you can't make it into college, don't worry about it. I got accepted with a 5000\$ grant per year with a 2.5 GPA. There were no recommenders and I didn't take the SAT. Just my transcript, essay, and DET. Not to brag *superior snorting*.
- If you happen to be taking the DET like I was, light a lamp behind your laptop. It may screw your eyeballs for the rest of the day but it beats losing 50\$ because they couldn't see your face.
- Start 5 months early. I swear, you always find yourself late to submitting something.
- The Common App has a 20 college limit. You can't apply to more than 20 colleges. You can't remove a college once you submit your application. If you really want to apply to more colleges, you can create a second account, but this just adds to the work load. You will have to explain to your counselor and recommenders that you have two accounts. You can use the same essay for both accounts though. Same goes for the recommenders and the counselor.
- Since you can waive the application fee with the help of your counselor, take risks by apply to big schools. You have nothing to lose and if you are willing to put in the work, do it. You never know when luck will strike.
- Start your CSS profile early. It takes a while to complete.
- Always have someone check your essay. Always!
- Once you have submitted your application on common app, you may receive an email with a pin to a private application portal. If you do, be sure to log in early and complete all the required supplemental documents. You may lose track of all your deadlines.
- CSS codes can be found by searching for it online. Just look up "Name of the school" CSS code. If you can't find it, it means that you have to ask the school via email or the school doesn't accept it at all.
- The ISFAA is NOT supposed to be filled out electronically. You have to print it out and fill it out by hand.
- Don't forget to celebrate.

Summary

I would like to use this section to thank very important people that helped me write this, namely Me and Myself. I would also like to thank our sponsors who are no longer with us, my sanity and my sleep schedule. They paid dearly. I just want to say good luck and hope you make it into your dream school, and once you make it there, share this book so others can as well. I also wanted to give you one more thing to help you along the way.

Links

Princeton Review Cracking the SAT Premium 2020 Edition Book (These are in epub format so you will need a special reader for it.)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XSnu40wB8wjlXtr8baRxwmLvGoAnVs9E/view?usp=sharing>

Princeton Review Chemistry Subject Test Book

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12vBTgVteb9XxhPfD9Wkn5yB3mPJRzyoa/view?usp=sharing>

Princeton Review Physics Subject Test Book

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11BlycFGH6omXHSSTpS8Y3kiQ4LxqkUr/view?usp=sharing>

Barron's Math Subject Test Book Level One and Two (these are in epub as well)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/140X69SECxF0ud9Zpb7dAXcFUQzAQdk_v/view?usp=sharing **Level 1**

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E9ao0J77ezKWlly_3bcXqs3jxktXfDya/view?usp=sharing **Level 2**

McGraw Hill TOEFL Study Guide Software (For Computers only)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AL-4X0doBRgzTg5fHh-SKgLIJzWRtK_ZP/view?usp=sharing

ACT Preparation Book

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v41zymWHd0pZbikcQKrKcfBRpsSHIUWU/view?usp=sharing>

IELTS Preparation Book

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HtrJBYZXwaBQPaj1fnu06NqA0Aarj8Ss/view?usp=sharing>

Comic Screen (epub reader for an android device)

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.viewer.comicscreen&hl=en&gl=US>

These may be a bit outdated, but it's better than nothing. You can always buy better books if you need them. Be sure to open the epub files with an epub reader. Otherwise they will just appear as a collection of photos. Apple's iBook app can open such files as well. There's probably a lot of stuff I should have covered, but didn't. It can't be helped, you will have to look for those on your own. For now, I'm done here. Later ma dudes.