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**THE 10 MOST  
IMPORTANT THINGS  
TO KNOW  
WHEN FILLING OUT  
THE COMMON APP**

1. Colleges want to know what your parents do and their level of education to get a sense of your background. Your background helps to frame your application.
2. When you are asked to self-report your rank and GPA under “Education,” have your transcript next to you and be honest. Colleges will be looking at what you report and matching it up to your official transcript.
3. If you think your senior courses will change, wait to fill out the section for “Current or Most Recent Year Courses.” If you drop a course or replace it, you will need to notify every college you applied to. Selective institutions don’t like it when a student reduces the rigor in their senior year courses.
4. Always lead with your core, academic classes first when listing them in your application. These classes matter more than non-academic classes like Phys Ed, Health, or elective classes.
5. You only have space to indicate five academic honors. Choose carefully. If you don’t have any honors to report, that’s okay.
6. Look at your college list and determine how each college wants to receive test scores. Some colleges permit or even require self-reporting. This allows a student to simply list their SAT or ACT scores right on the application in the testing section. Other colleges still require official score reports from the College Board or ACT.
7. Under “Activities,” you only have room to list ten things you do in your free time. Be thoughtful about what you include. It’s not about how many activities you list; it’s about the level of commitment and/or impact you have made. Make sure you list activities in order of importance: #1 should be the most important activity you do.
8. The main essay is typically required at most institutions. If a college indicates that the main essay is optional, I would recommend sending it.
9. Have proof for everything you report. Since the admissions scandal broke, colleges are more likely to verify specific items listed in the application to ensure a student’s authenticity and honesty.
10. Be very judicious when using the “Additional Information” section. Only use this section if it is absolutely necessary. Admissions officers easily get annoyed when students attach, include, or comment on details that are not necessary in the admissions process.