

# **The Application Starter Kit**

**Your Free Roadmap to Admissions Success**

ABH Consulting

[abhconsulting@outlook.com](mailto:abhconsulting@outlook.com)

# What Schools Are Really Looking For

Admissions committees evaluate applications holistically, but they're looking for specific things:

- **Academic Achievement:** Strong grades in challenging courses show you can handle college-level work
- **Intellectual Curiosity:** Going beyond requirements—research, independent projects, advanced coursework
- **Authentic Engagement:** Deep involvement in a few activities beats superficial participation in many
- **Personal Qualities:** Leadership, resilience, empathy, and character matter as much as achievements
- **Contribution Potential:** What will you add to the campus community?
- **Fit:** Genuine interest in what makes that specific school unique

**Key Insight:** Schools want students who will thrive AND contribute. Your application should show both.

# Month-by-Month Application Timeline

## Junior Year

- **September-October:** Take challenging courses, get involved deeply in 2-3 activities
- **November-December:** Research colleges, start a preliminary list of 15-20 schools
- **January-February:** Prepare for standardized tests (if taking them), visit colleges if possible
- **March-April:** Take SAT/ACT, identify teachers for recommendation letters
- **May-June:** Ask teachers for recommendations, start brainstorming essay topics

## Senior Year

- **July-August:** Finalize school list, draft personal statement, work on Common App
- **September:** Refine essays, request transcripts, finalize recommendation letters
- **October:** Submit Early Decision/Early Action applications (typically Nov 1 or Nov 15)
- **November:** Complete remaining applications, submit by Regular Decision deadlines
- **December-January:** Submit FAFSA and CSS Profile, complete all applications by Jan 1-15
- **February-March:** Wait for decisions, prepare for potential interviews
- **April:** Receive decisions, compare financial aid offers, visit accepted schools
- **May 1:** Commit to your chosen school!

# Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Applying to too many reach schools**

Build a balanced list with schools where you have a realistic chance of admission.

- **Generic essays**

Every essay should be specific to YOU. If someone else could write it, it's not personal enough.

- **Listing activities without showing impact**

Don't just list what you did—show what changed because of your involvement.

- **Waiting until the last minute**

Essays written in a rush rarely showcase your best thinking. Start early.

- **Not demonstrating interest**

Many schools track interest. Visit, attend virtual events, connect with admissions.

- **Ignoring the 'Why This School' essay**

Generic answers hurt you. Research specific programs, professors, and opportunities.

- **Not proofreading**

Typos and wrong school names signal carelessness. Always have someone else review.

- **Forgetting about financial aid deadlines**

Missing FAFSA or CSS Profile deadlines can cost you thousands in aid.

# Essay Brainstorming Prompts

Use these questions to find your story:

1. What's something you could talk about for hours without getting bored?
2. What's a moment when you completely changed your mind about something?
3. What's a problem you noticed that others overlooked? What did you do about it?
4. What's the hardest thing you've ever had to learn? How did you learn it?
5. What makes you different from other people with similar interests or achievements?
6. What would your best friend say is your most defining quality?
7. What's a belief you hold that most people would disagree with?
8. What's something you've failed at? What did you learn?
9. If you could solve one problem in your community, what would it be and why?
10. What's a small moment that revealed something important about who you are?

**Remember:** The best essays aren't about impressive topics—they're about authentic reflection. A small moment explored deeply beats a big accomplishment described superficially.

## Ready for More?

This starter kit covers the essentials, but there's so much more to learn about building a compelling application.

**The Application Blueprint Course** goes deeper with 16+ video lessons, templates, and step-by-step guidance for every part of the process.

**1:1 Consulting** gives you personalized support tailored to your unique story and goals.

Book a call to learn more:

[calendly.com/abhconsulting/30min](https://calendly.com/abhconsulting/30min)

Good luck with your applications!

— Alejandra, ABH Consulting