

## **Q: Why won't colleges make Life simpler by accepting the same application?**

**A:** Some do. For example, the handy Common Application can be completed once, then photocopied and sent to any of the more than 200 colleges nationwide that have agreed to honor it in order to minimize the efforts of the oft-overtaxed applicants. It can also be accessed and completed online. The list of subscribing colleges and universities and the application itself are available at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org), in most high school guidance offices, or by calling (800) 253-7746. Many of the subscriber colleges offer links to the Common Application directly from their Web pages. (*Hint:* Many schools slash or drop application fees for online applicants.)

The Common Application can also be completed on a computer disk, and some high school guidance offices provide disks for free. Otherwise they can be ordered for a small fee by calling the toll-free number above. Some colleges will require an additional brief supplement (and occasionally an extra essay), so if your child is using the Common Application, it is important to notify admission offices and ask if other forms are necessary. Supplement specifics — and often the forms themselves — are usually found on college Web sites as well.

When a student is applying Early Decision or to a special program or department, colleges should be alerted, and you should ask if any additional steps need to be taken.

If your child is applying to several schools in a state system or to colleges that share other bonds you may lighten the application load by asking admission officials if a multi-user application is available.

*Hint:* Before your child completes a single application, make a list of which target colleges accept which formats and/or forms. Look for overlap. With a little bit of advance planning, such consolidation may help save time and effort.

## **Q: Do admission officials accord the Common Application the same respect that they give their own?**

**A:** Despite some rumors to the contrary, colleges subscribing to the Common Application pledge to give it equal weight, and they do. (Some, including Harvard, use it exclusively) In fact the Common Application offers five very broad essay-question options, and officials often find the results are a breath of fresh air after spending an evening with 106 other dissertations on some esoteric subject that their own Board of Admission cooked up.

Any multi-user format that a target college accepts will be equally welcome as that school's own form. However, when sending paper applications or printouts, be sure to photocopy them neatly and clearly. Colleges don't appreciate getting an illegible, seventh generation photocopy. If you're still worried that bypassing an institution's own application will make your son or daughter seem like a less-than-serious applicant, here's a final bit of advice: Don't let the Common Application (or other generic alternative) be the only thing in your child's file. Include some indication of special interest in each institution. While a trip to campus and an interview are certainly the best bets in that department, they're not always possible. Even a brief note asking for specific information suggests to admission officials that your child has a genuine interest in their school and isn't merely mailing in a photocopied form as an afterthought.

*Source: Peterson's Panicked Parents' Guide to College Admissions, 3rd Edition*