

WHICH ACTIVITIES SHOULD YOU PRIORITIZE ON THE COMMON APP?

Though the common app is intended to be a thorough representation of “you” as a person, many students focus too heavily on the essays and end up overlooking the “Activities” list. This section asks you to describe the activities, organizations, clubs, and responsibilities that have been most important to you and your development over the past four years.

While it’s easy to simply write down a few (or 10) activities that you’ve been a part of since freshman year, you should actually spend some time *crafting* this list, giving thought to each word and activity you choose and how you emphasize your priorities. Below, we’ve provided some guiding tips to get you started.

Understand the meaning of “activity.”

In the case of the common app, your activities could include any involvement in the realm of arts, sports, music, media, student government, community engagement, volunteering, personal hobbies, and employment. While categories like “art” and “music” may seem vague, that is because you could include anything from a passion for painting to your membership in a band or school orchestra. Don’t limit yourself to activities that are strictly school-related, and definitely include a part-time job if it’s been instrumental to your personal growth outside of your academic classes.

List activities which are meaningful for you.

As the definition of “activity” in this circumstance is relatively broad, be deliberate with the activities that you choose. Though there is enough space for 10 different activities, don’t list a week-long stint in the Pottery Club in 9th grade just to fill a space. Instead, use this section as a space for expressing how you spend your time and what you deem most important in your life.

Pay attention to the order of your list.

Though admissions officers will read through the entire list, you should spend some time reflecting on the order in which you list your activities. Organizations or hobbies to which you are most committed should go at the top, especially if you intend on continuing them in college.

Writing a novel at home or studying computer programming in your spare time *can* be listed first if it’s an involvement you care about and intend on pursuing for at least the next few years.

Choose precise words when describing your activities.

Just like the order of your list matters, so does word choice. Use action words and vivid verbs when describing your extra-curricular engagements. This section can be cut and dry, but you can also get creative with your descriptions. Stating that you “research and implement practices for ecological conservation by bird-watching and taking samples in the local marsh” will catch a reader’s eye more so than stating that you “participate in the environmental movement.” You should also list both the club/activity name *and* your position, if it is relevant. Write in your own voice, and be as specific as possible without over-exaggerating any time commitments.

[notes:] Stress specific details, use action words, name the club itself as well as your position, past tense vs. present depending on involvement history, think outside of the box -

does not have to be school/sports related, don't over exaggerate time commitment, order matters **