



The Stress-Free Common App Timeline: *A Month-by-Month Checklist*

Summer - Fall Senior Timeline
Class of 2027

The Stress-Free Common App Timeline:

A Month-by-Month Summer and Fall Checklist to Keep You Ahead of Deadlines

JUNE

Common App Account Setup & Early Stages of Completion

Your main goal this month is to build the framework of your application so you know exactly what the AOs and admissions committees will see before you ever write a single essay word.

- Create your Common App account. *Note: The official app cycle rollover happens August 1st, but your main account info will carry over.*
- Complete the Profile through Activities sections. Fill these out completely to understand how much information is already being shared with admissions officers even before they read a single essay.
- Brainstorm your Common App Personal Essay (CAPE). Use the process of filling out your activities to find a baseline theme or story you want to highlight in your main statement.
- Review your senior year courses. Ensure every class line item is accurate against your official transcript.

Pro Tips:

Never leave “optional” questions blank. Every blank space is a missed opportunity to provide rich, extra context for admissions officers. Each page they’re reading is similar to a chapter in a book.

Consistently click the **Preview** button as you’re working through sections. This shows you exactly what the final PDF looks like to an admissions officer, and ensures your formatting is clean and consistent. The details matter!



JULY

The Personal Statement Bootcamp

With your background data logged, July is entirely dedicated to wrestling your main essay into shape.

- Draft your Common App Personal Essay. This is your core 650-word essay that is sent to every college on your list.
- Revise 3-4 times and finalize. Aim to have a polished, final draft of this main essay completely locked in by July 31st.
- Remember that most admissions officers are scanning so nitpicking over certain words is unlikely to make a meaningful difference. There is **no such thing as a perfect essay**.

AUGUST

The Official Reset & Hidden Prompts

August 1st is official "Rollover Day" when the Common App updates for the 26-27 application cycle. This month is about mapping out your remaining workload.

- Populate your "My Colleges" list now that the new cycle is live. 20 is the maximum.
- Select your prospective majors. Pay close attention to how your academic interests align with each school's options.
- Audit for "Hidden" supplemental essays. Go through and fill out the basic questions in each college's supplemental applications first.
- Tally your writing workload. By August 31, map out the exact number of supplemental essays you need to write.

Pro Tip:

Pay attention to the exact wording of the supplemental essays. Where is there overlap? How can you strategically reuse and recycle your essays?

SEPTEMBER

Supplemental Drafting & Recommenders

September is all about heavy lifting: drafting college-specific supplemental essays and securing your cheering section.

- Draft supplemental essays. Spend the month writing drafts for each individual college's prompts. Focus on core anecdotes.
- Invite your recommenders. Officially send the recommendation invites through the Common App portal to your school counselor, teachers, and other recommenders.

Pro Tip:

You can mix and match your recommendation letters! Invite several people who know you well in different contexts (e.g., teachers, mentors, coaches advisors, employers) to paint a more vivid picture of your personality.

OCTOBER

Review & Early Application Submissions

The pressure cooks up this month. October is for polishing your writing and beating the Early Action/Early Decision (EA/ED) rush the last two weeks of the month.

- Gather external feedback. Share your drafts with college counselors, admissions strategists, strong writer friends, or trusted teachers.
- Submit your early applications. Finalize and submit all EA/ED applications throughout the month. Pay attention to if a university releases decisions on a rolling cadence. Some regional universities reward early submissions; most highly selective colleges will start reading and evaluating applications after the deadlines.

Critical Warning:

Do not wait until the day of the deadline to submit. The Common App servers frequently crash or slow to a crawl on major deadline days. Also, remember that deadlines are 11:59 p.m. in your local time zone!

NOVEMBER

UC Applications & The Weekly Rhythm

If you are applying to the University of California (UC) system, this month shifts your focus to their specific platform.

- Draft UC PIQs (Personal Insight Questions). Leverage your Common App supplements to build your UC responses.
- Submit UC applications. Keep in mind UC applications are typically due November 30th / December 1st.
- Maintain a steady pace for Regular Decision. Establish a weekly rhythm to avoid a stressful holiday season, particularly if you did not apply ED to any universities.

Pro Tips:

Repurpose your writing! It is incredibly easy to reuse your Common App supplemental essays for your UC PIQs. However, adjust the style: UC admissions readers do not care for flowery, narrative language because the word counts are shorter.

Get straight to the point: Action → Result → Reflection.

Protect your sanity by aiming to finish one college application per week. Do not save a mountain of applications for late December!

DECEMBER

Regular Decision Application Submissions

This month is about maintaining your academic momentum, verifying that your submitted applications are complete, and knocking out those final RD deadlines.

- Keep your senior year grades strong. Check to see which of your schools require mid-year reports or first-quarter transcripts. Admissions officers will look at these before making a final decision. Don't fall victim to senioritis.
- Check your application portals weekly. Once you submit an application, colleges will send you login info for their specific applicant portal. Log in regularly to ensure no materials (like recommendation letters or transcripts) are marked as missing.

DECEMBER CONT.

- Monitor your email religiously. Check your main inbox and your spam/junk folders every few days. Colleges often send alumni interview requests, financial aid updates, or missing material alerts here (which frequently get filtered to junk, especially if you used a school email address for your Common App).
- Submit Regular Decision (RD) applications. Avoid the holiday rush and aim to hit "submit" on your RD applications well before the early January deadlines (which typically fall on January 1st, 5th, or 15th).

Timeline Complete

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