

# COMPLETING THE COMMON APP ONLINE 2023-2024

1. Open <http://www.commonapp.org/> and select “Create an account”. Your username is your personal email address (NOT FCPS email), and you will need to create your own password. In the future when you login, make sure the First-year student tab is highlighted when you do so.
2. Go first to the fourth tab that opens on the next screen (“college search”) and select the schools to which you are applying. Be liberal here – if you think you are going to apply, add the school. You can always delete (and add new ones) at any time before you apply. Having the schools identified places them on your dashboard (the first tab) and provides a quick summary of deadlines, completions, and requirements.
3. Begin the actual Common App (third tab):
  - All questions with a red asterisk MUST be answered. When each section is complete, a green check mark will appear and move to the screen to the next section to be completed.
  - Any items that ask for telephone numbers will also have a space for country codes (Common app is, after all, international). Be sure to use the drop-down menu and select “+1” for the United States or Common App will keep telling you that the section is not complete.
  - EDUCATION:
    - School subsection:
      - If you started here freshman year, your date of entry is Aug 2020
      - Your graduation date will be June 2024
    - Grades subsection:
      - FCPS does not rank students. Under “Class rank reporting” you will select “None”.
      - The exact number of the senior class is 577.
      - Your cumulative GPA is the GPA listed on your transcript and is also available in SIS under Course History.
      - SCHS uses a 4-point grading scale, and the GPA is weighted.
    - Current or Most Recent Year Courses subsection:
      - The course scheduling system at South County is Semester. List your courses in the following order:
        - English
        - Math (if still enrolled)
        - Science (if still enrolled)
        - Social Studies
        - World Language (if still enrolled)
        - Electives
    - Honors subsection: Honors includes merits, end-of-year awards, National Merit Commended/Semi-finalists, AP Scholar/ Scholar with Honors/Scholar with Distinction, National Latin/French Exam medals/certificates, and anything for which a student has been selected by the school even if unable to attend. Specify if it is a school, regional, state, or national award (e.g. Presidential Award for Community Service). Include non-academic awards too (i.e. recognition from work, sports, scouting, etc.) You have five slots given to you for this area, so choose the most prestigious if you have more than five.
    - Colleges & Universities subsection:
      - If you took dual enrollment courses during your junior year and have earned college credit for completing those courses, you need to indicate that here and may to need request an official transcript from the participating institution. This will be determined by the admissions office to which you are applying, and you should contact them to find out what is required.
      - If you are currently taking a dual enrollment course during your senior year for the first time, this will be reflected as work in progress on your FCPS transcript.

- **ACTIVITIES:** List these in priority order – most important to you goes first; next most important; etc. You have ten slots given to you in this section, and you only get 150 characters for description so abbreviate where appropriate. You can find additional guidance at <https://southcountyhs.fcps.edu/sites/default/files/media/inline-files/Approaching%20the%20Activities%20Section.pdf>.
  - **WRITING:** Note that the personal essay may or may not be required. Each school may also ask for supplemental responses in addition to, or instead of, the personal statement. It is recommended that all writing be done in Word or Google and then pasted into the text box rather than typing directly. Within the Writing tab there is an optional section for “Additional Information” including an optional piece to address anything specifically related to COVID-19 and a space to share anything that you feel is important for an admissions counselor to know. These are truly optional and are not required.
  - **COURSES AND GRADES:** Confirm whether the schools you are applying to ask you to complete this section. Instructional videos guide you through the process of self-reporting your courses and grades. Seniors receive a hard copy of their unofficial transcript in September. You can use that, or your course history is also available in SIS StudentVUE to complete this section.
4. Once the Common App has been completed (minus the essay – you don’t need to have done the essay to go to this next step), click on “My Colleges” tab (second tab). Within each college will be a list of steps including “Recommenders and FERPA” – click here.

Before you can invite and assign recommenders, you must complete the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) questions. We recommend you authorize schools and colleges to release and share records. We highly recommend you waive your right to access your recommendations and other documents being sent from SCHS. Doing so gives the colleges confidence that you trust your recommenders to write honest assessments. Teachers and colleges pay close attention to how you respond to this question. Warning: once any invited school official submits a recommendation, you cannot change your FERPA response!

After inviting your teacher as a **Recommender**, you must now **Assign** her/him as a recommender for the college. Once you’ve done this with your first school, do the same for every other school on your list. The “assign recommenders” part must be completed separately for each college.

5. Visit the Writing Supplement section under each entry in “My Colleges” to determine what your additional questions for that school may be.
6. Familiarize yourself with the Financial Aid tab. Note that under “How to apply for financial aid” that there is a section for college-specific financial-aid links that will include a hyperlink for each school in your Common App. Use this to determine deadlines and required documents. Check to see if any of your schools need you to complete a CSS Profile in addition to the FAFSA.
7. After you complete the Common App and all college supplements, you are ready to begin submitting your applications. Watch the Common App Payment and Submission video carefully to ensure that you complete everything. It will walk you through three critical steps and allow you to review the application pdf, pay the application fee, and provide your signature and click submit. **You MUST submit the complete Common App and any writing supplements AND pay your application fees by the deadline for your submission to be complete!**
8. **CHECK YOUR EMAIL.** You will receive confirmations and instructions for next steps after you submit each application. Do not miss important information that the college is sending to you.

Still have questions? Email Ms. Biehl at [habiehl@fcps.edu](mailto:habiehl@fcps.edu) or your counselor for help!