

## **READY, SET . . . GO TO COLLEGE!**

### **Class of 2021 Senior Packet and College Checklist**

Seniors, let Grady's College and Career Center (CCC) help you with your post-high school plans. We offer one-on-one help, workshops, visits from college reps, and lots of great resources.

Use this college checklist to get started. Stop by the CCC if you need help.

**RELAX! There are almost 4,000 institutes of higher learning in the U.S. They all want students. Hundreds of them will want YOU!**

**Sign up for Remind 101 to receive text notices from the CCC about college visits, test deadlines, workshops, and more. Seniors sign up by texting this number: 81010. In the message line: @grady2021**

### **What is in a College Application?**

Most schools will require you to submit with your application: official transcript, ACT or SAT test scores (if required), essay(s), and letters of recommendation. If you have the option to do an interview, do it! Check each school's specific requirements and note all deadlines.

**Create an account on the Common App website or the Coalition website.** Fill out your information once and you can apply to any of the nearly 900 schools that accept the Common App or the more than 140 that accept the Coalition App. (Note that Georgia Tech accepts the Common App, and UGA accepts both the Common and Coalition Apps ). In addition, the Common Black College Application allows you to apply to HBCUs. If a school you're applying to does not accept any of these, apply directly through that school's website. Most digital applications allow you to save your work as you go, so you can do a little at a time. You will upload your essay to your account, and teachers and counselors will upload their recommendations.

**Check each school's requirements and deadlines carefully;** some require only the primary essay, but others require supplemental or short answer essays.

**Request a transcript.** Grady uses Parchment.com and sends transcripts to each school electronically. **Set up your account now at [www.parchment.com](http://www.parchment.com).** Bonus: if you fill in your information, Parchment estimates your chances of acceptance at any school.

**Send test scores.** Request that SAT or ACT scores be sent to each school you're applying to. Do this through the SAT or ACT website.

**Pay the application fee.** On the Common App, there is a separate application fee for each school. You may receive a fee waiver if you qualify for free / reduced lunch or have financial hardship. Ask your counselor.

**Stay Organized.** Many students find it helpful to keep a master list of needed items AND to create a file for each school. Consider putting all deadlines and requirements into a spreadsheet. Find a way to organize the information that works for you.

## Teacher and Counselor Recommendations

### Who Do I Ask?

Most colleges require two teacher recommendations and one counselor recommendation. Ideally, choose two core subject teachers from your junior year—they are the ones who taught you most recently for an entire school year. Core subjects include math, science, English, social studies, and foreign language. Of course, there are exceptions to this guideline. You do not necessarily have to ask the teacher in whose class you got an A. Classes where you struggled but persevered, or where you overcame an obstacle, or where you contributed to spirited class discussions—those teachers can write a great recommendation. The teacher will talk about the kind of student you are and what you bring to the classroom experience.

You will also need a counselor recommendation. Grady's counselors are assigned according to last name. If you don't know your counselor personally, don't worry. Colleges understand that at most high schools, counselors are responsible for hundreds of students and can't know them all. Still, counselors can look at your record and write a recommendation in which they talk about your performance in the context of the school as a whole.

### When Do I Ask?

Ask early! The sooner the better! Now is better than next week. But at the very least, you should allow teachers three weeks to write a recommendation letter.

### What Do I Say?

Approach the teacher (in person or via email) and ask if they could write you a *good* recommendation letter. This will allow them to say no if they can't, and you don't want a recommendation letter that isn't good. If they agree, and they usually will, provide them with two things: 1) a resume of your high school activities, and 2) a personal note letting them know what you'd like them to include, such as a particularly meaningful class discussion, the fact that you pulled your grade up, or a certain project, paper, or assignment that you feel really shows your growth and potential. If the teacher also knows you through a club or other extracurricular activity, be sure to remind them about this as well. Finally, tell them clearly your application deadline.

### Do I Waive My Right to Read the Recommendation?

Yes. If you don't, the college will wonder why you don't trust the recommender.

### Do I Follow Up?

Yes! If the deadline is getting near and the teacher hasn't yet completed the recommendation, it is fine to politely remind them of the deadline.

### Do I Thank the Teacher or Counselor?

Absolutely! This is a lot of work, and they will appreciate a thank you note or email.

## Making Your College List: Step-by-Step

### What is a College List?

It's a working list of schools you might be interested in applying to. While you're looking, the list can be as big as you want. Ultimately, you'll narrow it down to about six to nine schools that you'll actually apply to. Your goal is to find a good fit for you. You can begin working on your college list at any time, but it'll be helpful if by the beginning of senior year, you have some idea of schools you want to apply to, even if you continue to refine that over the fall semester.

### Step One: Know Yourself

Even if you think you know exactly what school you want to attend, take some time to think about it. You may already have a dream school—maybe your parents went there, or you love the football team, or they offer a program you like. While that *may* be the perfect school for you, it is likely only one of *many* schools where you would thrive, so make sure you consider other schools, too. And if you have no idea where you'd like to go, this step is important.

Visit the CCC's website for links to self-surveys that will help you learn what sort of school you'd thrive in. There are lots of considerations: academics, social life, size, location, cost, programs, co-op or internship availability, religious affiliation, etc. The book *College Match: A Blueprint for Choosing the Best School for You*, by Steven Antonoff, is a great resource, and the worksheets in the book can be found at [www.schoolbuff.com](http://www.schoolbuff.com). Links are available on the CCC website, and the book is also available in the CCC. The website GA Futures ([www.gafutures.org](http://www.gafutures.org)) also has links to online tools where you can survey your interests, skills, and values.

### Step Two: Find Schools that Fit Your Needs

Once you know what you're looking for, it will be a lot easier to find it. The CCC website has links to numerous college search engines: just type in what you're looking for and the website will generate a list of schools that fit your criteria. Use several different websites—if the same college keeps popping up, it's probably one that should go on your list.

Don't forget about books! The CCC library has lots of books to help you learn about different colleges. It may be old school, but these can be helpful (once we can get back into the school).

### Step Three: Research

Once you have a list of schools that seem like they might be a good fit for you, it's time to get specific. Visit each school's website and learn more. Look up programs and departments that you're interested in. The *Fiske Guide* is a valuable resource book in the CCC. Read the entries for schools you're considering; it also suggests related schools you may not know about.

With no college visits in the CCC this fall, we plan to have virtual visits with college reps. Visit schools if you can, and take virtual tours if you can't visit in person.

### Step Four: Organize

This is a great area for parents to get involved. Find a system that works for you. It might be a spreadsheet that both you and your parents have access to—you can add columns to track and compare the most important factors for you. It may be a binder with a tab for each school. It may be a file box with a folder for each school. Many of the websites you used to search for schools can also allow you to create a search profile and organize your information, and the

Common App site is also helpful for organizing your list. Your organizational system will probably be a combination of things—see what works for you.

### **Step Five: Include Reach, Probable, and Safety Schools**

Your list should include some schools from each category. You'll need to know your GPA and test scores to figure this out. Request a transcript from Parchment to see your official GPA. The CCC recommends including on your list at least one Georgia school in each category.

- Reach schools are ones where your class rank, GPA, or test scores might be below or barely within the mid-range for the school's admitted students. These are often competitive and admit a low percentage of applicants.
- Probable schools are a realistic choice with a good match between your GPA and test scores and those of the mid-range of the school's admitted students.
- Safety schools are ones where your GPA and test scores are higher than the mid-range for the school's admitted students.

Strong academic students (GPA 3.2 or above) should also consider an Honors College with a Georgia school as a safety option they can feel good about.

Also consider **financial** reach, probable, and safety schools, but don't eliminate schools based on their published "sticker price." Private schools often offer the most financial aid, so they may end up competitively priced with public schools. Every college has a net price calculator on their website that can help you estimate what that school will cost your family.

### **Step Six: Narrow Your List**

By October of your senior year, you should begin to narrow your list. You should aim for six to nine schools that you'll apply to. Make sure you pay close attention to application deadlines. If you want to apply to a school that requires SAT subject tests (many of the more selective schools do), make sure you plan to take those no later than October.

### **Step Seven: Apply!**

Once you've finalized your list, it's time to apply. Make sure you know which platform to use to submit the application. Depending on the school, you can apply through the Common Application, the Coalition Application, the Common Black College Application (for HBCUs), or through the school's website. Make sure you know all the application requirements (such as any supplemental essays), and note all the deadlines, including for scholarships. Remember: you do not have to wait until the deadline to submit your application!

## SAT Test Dates 2020-21

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration (additional charges apply)
August 29, 2020	July 23	August 18
September 26, 2020	August 26	September 15
October 3, 2020	September 4	September 22
November 7, 2020	October 7	October 27
December 5, 2020	November 5	November 24
March 13, 2021	February 12	March 2
May 8, 2021	April 8	April 27
June 5, 2021	May 6	May 26

Register at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Fees: \$68 with essay; \$52 with no essay. Add \$30 for late registration. Fee waivers are available if you qualify for free/reduced lunch or have financial hardship. See your counselor. **Grady's school code is 110170.**

## ACT Test Dates 2020-21

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration (additional charges apply)
September 12, 13, 19, 2020	August 14	August 28
October 10, 17, 24, 25, 2020	September 17	September 25
December 12, 2020	November 6	November 20
February 6, 2021	January 8	January 15
April 17, 2021	March 12	March 26
June 12, 2021	May 7	May 21
July 17, 2021	June 18	June 25

Register at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Fees: \$70 with writing; \$55 with no writing. Add \$35 for late registration. Fee waivers are available if you qualify for free/reduced lunch or have financial hardship. See your counselor. **Grady's School Code is 110170.**

### It pays to prepare for these tests! Great free test prep is available online.

The best free option for SAT prep is **Kahn Academy**. You can link to your College Board account (if you've taken the PSAT or SAT previously), and it will focus your efforts where you need them most. Visit [www.kahnacademy.org](http://www.kahnacademy.org).

ACT now also offers free, personalized test prep at **ACT Academy**. Visit [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) and search for ACT Academy to get started. Paid test prep classes are also available. Check the CCC's website for more information.

## SAMPLE RESUME

See CCC website for template and resume tips. A resume is nothing more than a place to organize your high school experiences.

Susan Smith

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### ACADEMICS

- GPA: 3.5
- Member of National Honor Society
- Honors and AP course work in English Literature, American Literature, American History, World History, and French

### SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

- *The Southerner*, award-winning student newspaper  
Staff Writer and Photographer (10, 11, 12)
- Tennis Team  
JV (9, 10), Varsity (11, 12)
- Grady Jesters, debate team, (9 -12)

### OUT-OF-SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULARS

- Founded Tennis for Tots  
Taught grade school children weekly and organized tournaments (10-12)
- Vacation Bible School, teen leader, Atlanta Church (summers, 9-11)

### SUMMER EXPERIENCE

- Central Georgia Youth Tennis 5-Week Summer Intensive (11)
- Participated with "Volunteens," a Zoo Atlanta internship (10)

### WORK EXPERIENCE

- Hostess, Osteria Pizzeria, 10 hours per week during school year and 20 hours per week during summer (11 to present)
- Babysitter for two pre-school children, 6 hours per week during school year and 20 hours per week in summers (10-12)

### HONORS AND AWARDS

- State 2nd place finalist, Lincoln-Douglas Debate (12)

## Writing Your College Essay

Your essay gives a human face to your college application. It is your chance to tell the college something about you beyond what they can find in your resume, grades, and test scores. It's the one part of your application that you have complete control of.

### Some characteristics of a good essay

- It includes a story or anecdote about your life—one that only you can tell.
- It includes specific details that bring the story to life and make it memorable.
- It includes thoughtful reflection and self-analysis. This is key—how did the story you tell change or affect you? What did you learn?
- It has a strong opening—a hook to get the reader's attention—and a strong closing, which may relate back to the beginning.
- It includes descriptive language evoking specific sights, smells, and feelings, and it uses strong verbs. But it avoids fancy words plucked from the thesaurus.
- It answers the prompt and stays within the word limit.
- It has excellent grammar, spelling, and punctuation and uses the first person.
- It avoids clichés, trite conclusions, and vague generalities.
- It's not wordy.
- It is your own work (obviously), and also shows your own authentic voice.

### Before you begin writing

To write a good essay you first have to read some. Find sample essays in the CCC, on the CCC website, in the Writing Center, or online. It's common to feel you don't have a story to tell, but you do. The CCC has some exercises to help get your ideas flowing.

### Tell a story

Decide what quality about yourself you want your essay to reveal (determined, compassionate, imaginative, etc.). Your essay should begin with a slice-of-life story or anecdote that illustrates this quality in action. The story you tell doesn't have to be a dramatic; almost any topic can be crafted into a compelling essay, as long as it's something you care about. Seemingly mundane topics can make the most memorable essays.

### Explain how the story matters

Show how you've grown, changed, or learned as a result of what happened.

### Edit, proofread, revise

You'll likely go through many drafts. That's ok; it's part of the process. Reading your essay out loud is a great way to catch missing words or areas that aren't working.

**Contact the CCC**, or show your essay to a teacher, friend, or parent for their input. When school is in the building, you can walk into the CCC any time for help. Otherwise, email [CCCessayhelp@gmail.com](mailto:CCCessayhelp@gmail.com) and we will be glad to help you.

**2020-2021 Common Application Essay Prompts (650-word limit)**

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

**2020-2021 Coalition App Essay Prompts (500-550 words)**

1. Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it.
2. Describe a time when you made a meaningful contribution to others in which the greater good was your focus. Discuss the challenges and rewards of making your contribution.
3. Has there been a time when you've had a long-cherished or accepted belief challenged? How did you respond? How did the challenge affect your beliefs?
4. What is the hardest part of being a student now? What's the best part? What advice would you give a younger sibling or friend (assuming they would listen to you)?
5. Submit an essay on a topic of your choice.

**2020-21 University of Georgia Essay Prompt (In addition to the Common App or Coalition App essay)**

The college admissions process can create anxiety. In an attempt to make it less stressful, please tell us an interesting or amusing story about yourself from your high school years that you have not already shared in your application. (200-300 words)

**2020-21 Georgia Tech Essay Prompts**

Georgia Tech will no longer require you to submit your Common App essay. Instead they are requiring the two following short answer prompts (50-300 words):

1. Why do you want to study your chosen major specifically at Georgia Tech?
2. All applicants must choose one of the two questions below:
  - Georgia Tech is committed to creating solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges. Tell us how you have improved or hope to improve the human condition in your community.
  - If you feel that your personal or community background can provide additional insight to your application that we have not already seen elsewhere, please take this opportunity to share that information with us.

## How Do I Pay for College?

This is a big issue, and one that will involve your parents. Tuition prices can seem scary, but don't assume that high tuition makes a school out of reach. Most schools offer need-based and merit-based aid. Many, if not most, students pay less—often far less—than the sticker price. When you're accepted to a school, they will offer you a financial aid package, which consists of some combination of grants or scholarships (which you do not have to pay back), loans (which you do), and work-study. Many of the most selective schools even guarantee that they will meet 100% of demonstrated financial need. That can make these schools a very good deal. Remember that you need to consider the total cost of attendance per year (including tuition plus room and board, books, and fees). The CCC library has many books on paying for college.

**Complete the FAFSA online.** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is REQUIRED for the HOPE scholarship and all financial aid. It becomes available online October 1—complete it as early as possible. Your parents will have to provide much of the financial information. Even if you don't think you'll qualify for need-based aid, STILL complete the FAFSA. You might be surprised. In addition, some schools may require you to file the FAFSA before they offer you any sort of aid, including merit aid.

**Contact each school where you are accepted and ask them what sort of package you can expect.** Parents can make this call. Financial Aid officers are happy to speak to them. Many schools will automatically consider you for scholarships when you apply. All colleges are required to have a net price calculator on their website, which should help you figure out what sort of aid you might qualify for and what the school will actually cost you. Remember that you must re-apply for financial aid every year.

**Research other scholarships.** While most financial aid will come from the school itself (as grants, scholarships, loans, or work study), private scholarships (available from businesses, civic organizations, churches, and more) can help fill in the gap. Our college advisers maintain a list of great scholarships you can apply for, and there are many scholarship search engines online. Check the CCC website for links and come to the CCC to consult *The Ultimate Scholarship Book*.

### What if I don't want to go to a four-year college?

College isn't for everybody. Even if you choose a different path, you still have lots of options. There are numerous trade schools and community colleges that offer great training and allow you to be out in the world earning a good living in a couple of years. The military is a great option for some students, as well. Stop by the CCC for more information.

### Grady High School Scholarship Guide

Our counselors and college advisers are constantly updating and adding to this list of great scholarship opportunities. Please check it often! Find a link on Grady's website under Guidance—Counseling Department Page—or on the CCC website. Or visit:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1VoKqY-16rdrWDzABZCggh3joh84KHMj\\_k1Fe\\_wjgmCU/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1VoKqY-16rdrWDzABZCggh3joh84KHMj_k1Fe_wjgmCU/edit#gid=0)

## HOW TO SEARCH FOR PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIPS

If there is a gap between the financial aid that a school offers you and the cost of attending that school, you may want to search for some private scholarships. Any scholarship you apply for requires some work on your part, and statistically you must apply for about ten for every one you earn. Most scholarships don't renew for the next year, so you'll need to keep applying for them, even when you're in college. And remember: do not pay for a scholarship search and do not apply for scholarships that ask only for your name and contact information for a drawing—those are just looking for your information, and the chance of receiving a scholarship is small. The best scholarships to apply for are the ones for which you are most qualified. (Don't apply for a scholarship for Native American students from Arizona who want to study filmmaking if you are none of those things). Most scholarships have specific criteria—apply to the ones that fit you. Avoid sweepstakes scholarships that are awarded through a random drawing, which are usually just searching for your information, with only a small chance of winning.

Here are a few ways to find scholarships:

- Visit the CCC and look through *The Ultimate Scholarship Book* for scholarships that are a good fit (once we can return to school).
- Look at the list of scholarships compiled by our college advisers. You can find a link on the CCC's website: [www.tinyurl.com/ccgrady](http://www.tinyurl.com/ccgrady).
- Visit a scholarship search engine. There are many, but here are a few good ones:
  - Fast Web ([www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com))
  - College Board ([www.bigfuture.com](http://www.bigfuture.com))
  - Tuition Funding Sources ([www.tuitionfundingsources.com](http://www.tuitionfundingsources.com))
  - Niche ([www.niche.com](http://www.niche.com))
  - Scholly ([www.myscholly.com](http://www.myscholly.com)) This web and app-based scholarship search engine actually has a small fee (\$2.99) but is worth the price.
  - United Negro College Fund ([www.uncf.org](http://www.uncf.org))
- Conduct your own customized Google search for scholarships. Type in “scholarship” plus words that apply specifically to you, such as “left-handed,” “poetry,” “game design,” “juggler,” or “LGBTQ.” Search for specific medical conditions, learning differences, ethnic or cultural identity, military parent, etc. Search for scholarships using any terms that describe you, your hobbies or interests, your family, or what you may want to study. You'll be well qualified for the scholarships that turn up.
- Check with your parents' workplaces or your place of worship. Many offer scholarships.