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For: *adMISSION POSSIBLE*®

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM STUDENTS AND PARENTS

STUDENTS

Q: What exactly is the Common Application?

A: In 1975, fifteen colleges who wanted to provide a standardized application for undergraduate applicants created the Common Application. Today, nearly 400 private and public colleges and universities make use of the Common Application, which is available online or as hard copy. In addition to the standard application form, many colleges also require students to complete college-specific supplement forms.

Many public universities and a few private colleges have their own applications, accessible through their respective web sites. In addition, as of 2007 the Universal College Application (UCA) became available. About 80 colleges accept the UCA.

Q: I am back at school from my summer vacation and trying to figure out which schools I should apply to early. What's the difference between Early Action, Restricted Early Action and Early Decision?

A: As you probably know, there are some real differences in the different early programs.

Early Action is a non-binding program wherein students apply by the first of November (for some schools, November 15) and receive their admission decision by the middle of December. If accepted, a student can commit to the college immediately, but is not obligated to commit until the May 1 response deadline. EA colleges do not place any restrictions on the number of other early applications you submit.

Restricted Early Action (or Early Action, Single Choice) This, too, is a non-binding admission option (with the usual due dates of November 1- 15 and decision date of middle of December), but in this program a student may not apply to any other early program, including Early Action and Early Decision (with the exception of public college and university rolling or regular applications).

Early Decision In this binding contract application program, students apply by the first of November (or November 15 for some schools) and receive their admissions decision by the middle of December. If accepted, students are obligated to say yes or no by a certain date. Students may not apply to any other Early Decision or Early action schools, but may apply to Early Action schools, EAI, EDII and rolling admission schools.

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Q: What is an activities resume?

A: An activities resume is a 1-4 page written picture of your academic, extracurricular, sports and other involvements, that focuses on your high school years, but also ties in long term interests and activities that may go back to when you were a young child.

Q: I haven't heard much from other students about their using a resume. Why do you think I should have one?

A: As far as adMISSION POSSIBLE is concerned, a resume is the cornerstone of a student's application. After grades and test scores, colleges are very interested in what students do when they are not in class. An Activities Resume is a perfect way to show that. Developing a resume is an opportunity to get organized, literally seeing what you have done and developing ideas about what to focus your application essays on. Because resumes are the exception, not the norm, colleges are usually impressed with students who take the time to put one together. A well organized, articulate resume is a way of standing out from the crowd. Many students have declared that they got into colleges because of their respective resumes.

You can give your resume to:

1. Your high school counselor to help him or her know something about you and what you have done. Counselors really appreciate when you provide them with a resume; it saves them time and provides ammunition for writing the Secondary School Reports.
2. Teachers who complete the Teacher Evaluation forms and other people who write extra letters of recommendation. They really appreciate having a student resume, for the same reason that counselors do.
3. Admissions people with whom you have an interview. A resume is a wonderful tool to get a conversation started.
4. An accompaniment to your college applications (except for the public universities such as the UCs and an occasional university such as Stanford who ask you not to include a resume or other extra material)

Q: Why do you say that personal stories are an admissions secret weapon?

A: One of the best ways students have of distinguishing themselves from other applicants is writing essays that are different, one of a kind if you will. There is no better way of accomplishing this than to use your own personal stories and anecdotes.

Think about it: every family has stories about children that are told over and over at Thanksgivings and other family occasions. Some are apocryphal; others are nothing more than cute little episodes. Life is filled with little and big events that are potential fodder for college essays. Personal stores are perfect for college essays because they are pregnant with messages about who you are- exactly what colleges want to know.

As you identify the different essay questions on college applications, think about what you have done, said, or experienced that can be an illustration of a point you want to make.

Some examples of personal stories are:

- A young boy saw that his school was littered with all kinds of paper lunch bags, milk cartons and trash. He was so upset by the mess that he designed, made and then sold recyclable lunch bags, the profits of which went back to his school. *This story was used to answer an essay question about how a student might contribute to a university or the larger community.*
- A word-loving girl described how as a 9 year old she would stay up on Saturday night until the NY Times was delivered so that she could read William Safire's column on words. *This story was used to answer a question about why a student has chosen a particular major, in this case, English as a future major, and how she has always been a "word-oriented" kid.*

PARENTS

Q: My son is a sophomore in high school and I would like him to begin thinking about what kind of colleges he wants to apply to? Whenever I bring college admissions up, he shows no enthusiasm. What can I do?

A: Different students have different feelings about college admissions and at different times. Some students don't want to have anything to do with college admissions until the summer before their senior year. Frankly, that's a little late. However, at any time parents can begin getting educated about college admissions, gather materials such as admissions guide books and go online to find information. Junior year is an excellent time for students to start getting serious about coming up with a college list, visiting colleges and especially preparing for the SAT or ACT.

Q: What is an independent admissions counselor and what does that person do?

A: An independent college admissions counselor (sometimes called an educational consultant) is an individual who is paid to provide high school students with information, advice and coaching about the college admissions process. Like admissions counselors in public and private schools, most private admissions counselors have a good deal of knowledge and experience with college admissions in a high school or college setting. Some have teaching credentials; others have Master's or even Doctorate degrees. Independent counselors usually offer one or more of the following: Advice about course and extracurricular activities; assistance in developing a student's college list based on his/her academic and personal background and needs; coaching on how to interact with college admissions officers, including interviews; help in developing an activities resume; suggestions for how to come up with good essay topics, as well as editing assistance; techniques for good interviews; advice about how to make a final college choice.

EDITORS NOTE: To speak with Marjorie Hansen Shaevitz or for more information about *adMISSION POSSIBLE*®, please contact Nancy Trent or Pamela Wadler at 212-966-0024 or pam@trentandcompany.com.