

Activities: How to Plan and Edit Your List

The Common App provides space to describe how you were involved in up to ten extracurricular activities in many different categories:

Academic	Art	Athletics: Club
Athletics: JV/Varsity	Career-Oriented	Community Service (Volunteer)
Computer/Technology	Cultural	Dance
Debate/Speech	Environmental	Family Responsibilities
Foreign Exchange	Foreign Language	Internship
Journalism/Publication	Junior R.O.T.C.	LGBT
Music: Instrumental	Music: Vocal	Religious
Research	Robotics	School Spirit
Science/Math	Social Justice	Student Govt./Politics
Theater/Drama	Work (paid)	Other Club/Activity

You can include up to ten activities, but that doesn't mean you have to have ten. Lots of students list just a few, and they get into great schools too.

Make a List

In an editable document (not on the Common App website), list all the possible activities you could include. Use the categories above to help you think of ideas.

For each of the activities you've listed, make some notes or write a few sentences describing:

- What the activity is
- What you did/How you were involved
- Any specific positions or leadership roles you held (e.g., secretary, co-chair, captain, bake sale coordinator, member, founder)
- Any special accomplishments, honors, or other important information

The Common App gives you 50 characters to describe your position or leadership, plus 150 characters to describe the activity and how you were involved. When you write this first rough draft, don't try to stay within the character limits yet.

Here's an example:

Activity: Animal shelter

What I did: I volunteered for two years. I fed dogs, played with cats, and cleaned crates.

Leadership: Last year they asked me to work at the front desk answering calls because I know a lot about how the shelter works.

Other important information: I'm the only high school volunteer at the shelter. All the other volunteers are adults.

Keep It Brief

After you write your list and notes, try drafting a 150-character (or fewer) capsule description for each activity.

The biggest challenge of the activities list is keeping each description below the 150-character limit. Considering how information gets spread out across the different questions will help you save space in your description. For instance, you don't need to write the words "National Honors Society" in your description because they already appear in the *Organization Name* section. Similarly, your description doesn't need to say that you were on student council "for four years" because there is a separate space for indicating which years you were involved. These may seem like small changes, but they make a big difference when your description limit is only 150 characters, including spaces and punctuation.

Here's how the notes about working at the animal shelter could fit on the Common App:

Position: Volunteer, receptionist

Description: Sole high school volunteer. Responsibilities include feeding dogs, playing with cats, cleaning crates, answering phones, and greeting visitors.