



Writing for the US Application: A Short Guide for Alumni



The sections to pay attention to:

- 1) The Five Academic Honours
- 2) The Ten Activities
- 3) The Essays

Tip: Do not focus on one section at the expense of the rest: your application is read *as a whole*.

Writing for the Academic Honours Section



The Academic Honours demonstrate your academic aptitude, in any field of study. This could be within or without school, ranging from academic prizes (e.g., best in a subject, excellence awards, JC scholarships) to paper presentations (e.g., science fair poster presentations) to competitions (e.g., essay writing competitions, business competitions, Olympiads).

Take a look at your academic track record from Sec 3 to now, and consider: what were the awards and achievements you had that you were proudest of? These will be the ones you want to present.

Tip: ensure that what you present is an **academic** achievement!



Writing for the Activities Section

Review all the activities you have done, which capture your growth and reflect your interests and passions as a unique individual.

Include activities which are academic and non-academic, within and without school, from Year 3 to now. Do not neglect what you have done in your NS or gap year—this is important in your growth too.

In shortlisting, consider:

- Which activities most represent your values and what you stand for?
- Which activities helped you grow as a person or (re)discover yourself?
- Which had a wider, positive impact on the people around you?
- How have you demonstrated resilience, flexibility and creativity? This is especially in light of Covid-19's impact on the world.

Tip: once-off activities don't demonstrate passion and ability as much as sustained involvement does.

When writing:

The 10 Activities should capture your personality and philosophy, values as a unique individual.

As you have only 150 characters, consider: have you explained what you accomplished in a clear and succinct manner? Leave out minor details of *doing*. Capture instead what it shows about *you as a person*.

When refining the overall, consider the big picture:

- Does my *overall* list of activities show what means the most to me as a person?
- Have I adequately demonstrated my personality or philosophy through what I have done?
- Have I used phrases or acronyms which require further explanation?
- Are my titles and descriptions universally understandable?
- For boys: do not neglect NS! This is a period of growth and maturation too.

Writing the Essays: Seven Principles to Remember



1. Avoid generalisations and clichés. The story you tell should be so unique, only you can tell it. Be reflective and insightful.
2. Each school you apply to is different. Your essays should likewise be different: Spend time and effort in understanding the schools you are applying for, and in differentiated writing for them.
3. Write your story in *your own voice*. Don't be afraid of it!
4. In telling your story, know your purpose. Your application, when read as a whole, should show as many different facets of yourself as possible. Avoid: unnecessary detail, losing track of your key message, repetition.
5. It is good to seek feedback from friends, particularly when trying to make sense of your experiences, or as a helpful check on grammar and language. However, friends do not dictate your story. *You* make the choice of what to write, and how to write it.
6. If talking about the impact of Covid-19, frame your learning positively: it is easy to complain, far more difficult to show maturity, learning, adaptability of spirit and ingenuity.
7. A good US application takes months of time, effort and research. Thus, start writing early. Do NOT wait until the last minute and begin only in Nov-Dec. **Adhere to all deadlines** as required by the universities and us.

Additional note to alumni:

Depending on the national situation, we will avail you of channels to seek feedback on your application materials. Check back on the RI open website for details in mid-July.

Remember to approach your tutors early – follow our timeline closely. Successful applications require the help of others, so it's good manners and practice to give your teachers time to write well about you.

Good luck with your applications!

With all best wishes,
Your teacher-counsellors @ HEO