

## **Some Tips for Completing the Common App Activities List**

It is important to give some careful time and thought to this part of the CA, as it may be your only opportunity (short of a resumé which not many students include) to highlight the important contributions you have made to various activities and leadership roles, community service, jobs, interests outside of school - that comprise a great deal of your time and that have definitely played a role in who you are today and what you will bring to your college community.

There are ten spaces to list your activities. Do not feel compelled to use them all. Colleges would rather see a few activities that you've made a significant commitment to - especially those in which you have played leadership roles - than several of lesser involvement. Therefore, it is important to look for quality over quantity. You can often combine multiple activities under one heading if none is individually important enough or if you need to save space.

### **Some Guidelines:**

1. List your activities from most important to least and those in which you have participated the longest and most recently (grades 9-12 only, not before).
2. You will have a drop down menu where you must choose the type of activity; after choosing, enter the Activity Name and your role. You have 50 characters in this section. Use the space effectively so that you have more room in the next section to describe the activity.
3. You will see that the choices include many activities that take place outside of school only - and a new one this year that involves responsibilities you have in your family (an important choice to make if it applies to you).
4. There are 150 characters in the next space where you can choose the most important contributions you made - do not write a general description of the club or group, but make it all about you and your role in the activity.
5. Do not use full sentences. Use small phrases and action verbs to describe what you have done. It is ok to use symbols and abbreviations.
6. Be specific! Exactly what was your role; how many people did you lead; how much money did you raise, etc.?
7. Be sure to check all the years you participated in the activity - the weeks per year and the hours per week. Be aware of total weeks and hours, however, so the reader will know that what is presented is logical/doable. You could estimate 10 weeks for a sport (if seasonal only for you), 36-38 weeks in a school year.
8. Finally, check if you would like to continue this activity in college - not a binding answer - but say no to others as well.

## Other General Tips:

1. Be sure to list the actual name of the club/activity on the "Position/Leadership" line.
2. Choose a different word at the beginning of each description line - generally a verb. Avoid general words that don't reveal any particular skill.
3. Use the present tense for activities that are still ongoing and past if they stopped before this year.
4. Use active verbs that describe; instead of saying you "worked" at a camp say "taught photography, organized recreational activities for children, ages 7 - 12, led improvisational theater workshop..."
5. Give specific details rather than generalizations. Emphasize tangible or measurable impact. For example, if you raised money for a group, mention the actual amount and who received the funds.
6. Keep your punctuation consistent. For example, if you opt to end a description with a period, make sure to do the same for all the others.
7. Feel free to think outside the box...you are welcome to put in an activity you simply enjoy that is not related to an organization.
8. Don't use complete sentences; cut extra words; use lists.
9. Look for opportunities to emphasize leadership roles, even if they weren't elected positions..... "led soccer practices, assisted in recruiting new team members, planned fund-raising events."
10. Print out a preview of this section and proofread carefully. Also share it with your parents; maybe you missed something important.