

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# APPLICATION GUIDE

# APPLICATION AT A GLANCE

## TEST-OPTIONAL POLICY

USC will be test-optional through the spring, summer and fall 2024 terms. This policy applies to general university and South Carolina Honors College admission, as well as merit scholarships awarded by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Freshman admission will be based primarily on high school courses and grades. Students will indicate on the application whether or not they want USC to consider their SAT or ACT test scores in the admission process.

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST (REQUIRED MATERIALS)

- Completed application (including essay and activities section)
- \$65 application fee or valid fee waiver for eligible students
- Unofficial high school transcript
- Self-reported or official SAT/ACT test scores (if applicable for selected testing plan)

## SOUTH CAROLINA HONORS COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST (REQUIRED MATERIALS)

- Submitted USC application (recommended by the October 15 Early Action deadline)
- Submitted Honors College application supplement (including two essays and one short answer)
- One letter of recommendation
- Resume (optional, but highly recommended)

## IMPORTANT DATES

### EARLY ACTION APPLICANTS

<b>October 15</b>	Application deadline
<b>November 1</b>	Credentials deadline*
<b>Mid-December</b>	Decisions released

### HONORS COLLEGE / TOP SCHOLAR APPLICANTS

<b>November 15</b>	Application deadline
<b>December 1</b>	Credentials deadline*
<b>Mid-February</b>	Decisions released

### REGULAR DECISION APPLICANTS

<b>December 1</b>	Application deadline
<b>January 15</b>	Credentials deadline*
<b>Mid-March</b>	Decisions released

*\*Last date to submit any outstanding items listed on your USC Admissions Portal and to change your testing plan.*

## REQUIRED COURSES

### ENGLISH — 4 UNITS

4 units with strong reading, writing, communicating and research

Recommended that 2 of the 4 units are literature based, including American, British and World literature

College prep English I, II, III and IV meet requirement

### MATHEMATICS — 4 UNITS

Algebra I\*

Algebra II

Geometry

Fourth higher level unit selected among Algebra III, pre-calculus, calculus, probability and statistics, discrete mathematics or computer science\*\*

### LABORATORY SCIENCE — 3 UNITS

2 units from different fields: biology, chemistry, physics or earth science

1 additional unit from biology, chemistry, physics or earth science or any other laboratory science with biology, chemistry, physics and/or earth science as a prerequisite\*\*\*

### SOCIAL STUDIES — 3 UNITS

1 unit U.S. history

½ unit economics

½ unit government

1 unit world history or geography strongly recommended

### WORLD LANGUAGE — 2 UNITS

Both units must be same language

### FINE ARTS — 1 UNIT

Art appreciation, art history or performance in one of the fine arts

### ACADEMIC ELECTIVES — 2 UNITS

2 units of college-preparatory coursework\*\*\*\*

Computer science with significant programming content recommended

\*Foundations in algebra and intermediate algebra may count together as a substitute for Algebra I if a student successfully completes Algebra II.

\*\*Computer science should involve significant programming content, not simply be keyboarding or using applications.

\*\*\*Courses in general science or introductory science for which one of these four units is not a prerequisite will not meet this requirement.

\*\*\*\* Alternative electives include college-preparatory courses in English, fine arts, foreign languages, social science, humanities, mathematics and laboratory science (for which biology, chemistry, physics or earth science is a prerequisite).

# STEP 1

## PREPARE TO APPLY

### Review USC's deadlines and notification timelines

The deadlines and notification timelines are based on which admission plan you choose: Early Action or Regular Decision.

If you apply Early Action, you will receive your decision by mid-December. To meet this deadline, you must have an application submitted by October 15 and all required materials submitted by November 1.

If you apply Regular Decision, you will receive your admission decision by mid-March. To meet this deadline, you must have an application submitted by December 1 and all required materials submitted by January 15.

The requirements are the same whether you apply Early Action or Regular Decision. Refer to page 2 of this guide for all required materials.

### Consider your application options

There are two ways to apply for admission to USC. You should choose the application you are most comfortable submitting. There is no advantage in the admission process to using one application over the other, and there is no separate application for merit scholarships.

#### Option 1

#### USC APPLICATION

This is our general university application available on our admissions website. It is a great option if you feel more comfortable using each individual school's application instead of the Common App.

[Start your USC Application](#)

#### Option 2

#### COMMON APPLICATION

Our university, along with more than a 1,000 other institutions, accepts the Common App, making it more convenient for you to apply to several colleges at one time.

[Start your Common Application](#)

# STEP 1

## PREPARE TO APPLY

### □ Consider your testing plan options

As you are deciding your preferred testing plan, we suggest reviewing our academic profile. It shows the ranges for standardized test scores, high school GPA and class rank for general admission, Capstone Scholars and the South Carolina Honors College. These ranges reflect the middle 50% of students who were admitted in 2023 and give you a general idea of where you may fall within each academic range.

Students are able to change their testing plan via their [USC Admissions Portal](#) until the [credentials deadline](#) associated with their preferred admission plan.

If you choose to have your test scores considered in the admission process, you will self-report the scores in your [USC Admissions Portal](#).

### STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES\* MIDDLE 50%

#### S.C. RESIDENTS

1150 - 1330 SAT  
24 - 30 ACT

#### NONRESIDENTS

1270 - 1400 SAT  
28 - 32 ACT

#### HONORS COLLEGE

1430 - 1520 SAT  
32 - 34 ACT

#### CAPSTONE SCHOLARS

1340 - 1420 SAT  
30 - 32 ACT

### HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE\*\* MIDDLE 50%

#### FRESHMAN CLASS

4.1 - 4.7 HS GPA  
7% - 29% Class rank

#### HONORS COLLEGE

4.5 - 5.1 HS GPA  
1% - 5% Class rank

#### CAPSTONE SCHOLARS

4.3 - 4.9 HS GPA  
4% - 16% Class rank

# STEP 1

## PREPARE TO APPLY

### Verify you have the following required high school courses

#### English – 4 units

4 units with strong reading, writing, communicating and research

Recommended that 2 of the 4 units are literature based, including American, British and World literature

College prep English I, II, III and IV meet requirement

#### Mathematics – 4 units

Algebra I\*

Algebra II

Geometry

Fourth higher level unit selected among Algebra III, pre-calculus, calculus, probability and statistics, discrete mathematics or computer science\*\*

#### Laboratory Science – 3 units

2 units from different fields: biology, chemistry, physics or earth science

1 additional unit from biology, chemistry, physics or earth science or any other laboratory science with biology, chemistry, physics and/or earth science as a prerequisite\*\*\*

#### Social Studies – 3 units

1 unit U.S. history

½ unit economics

½ unit government

1 unit world history or geography strongly recommended

#### World Language – 2 units

Both units must be same language

#### Fine Arts – 1 unit

Art appreciation, art history or performance in one of the fine arts

#### Academic Electives – 2 units

2 units of college-preparatory coursework\*\*\*\*

Computer science with significant programming content recommended

\* Foundations in algebra and intermediate algebra may count together as a substitute for Algebra I if a student successfully completes Algebra II.

\*\* Computer science should involve significant programming content, not simply be keyboarding or using applications.

\*\*\* Courses in general science or introductory science for which one of these four units is not a prerequisite will not meet this requirement.

\*\*\*\* Alternative electives include college-preparatory courses in English, fine arts, foreign languages, social science, humanities, mathematics and laboratory science (for which biology, chemistry, physics or earth science is a prerequisite).

### Gather your materials

- **Copy of your transcript(s):** Upload a legible unofficial copy of your high school transcript or a web-based copy that lists grades through the end of your junior year, and shows your full name and the name of your high school. You may upload documents in PDF or JPG formats. Do not send an official high school transcript unless it is requested.
- **Senior-year and middle school coursework:** You will be required to self-report your senior-year coursework in progress and any middle school courses that qualify as high school credits.
- **A list of activities, work and family responsibilities:** This includes work, volunteering, sports, research, clubs and organizations, arts, taking caring of family members and other activities. If it's important to you, we want to hear about it!
- **Academic honors and achievements:** We want to learn about any areas in which you excel or achievements that are meaningful to you.
- **Parent/legal guardian information:** This includes parent or guardian contact information, education level and if they attended USC. This information is collected for demographic purposes.
- **Test Scores:** Compile your SAT/ACT scores if you intend to report them. You will also have an opportunity to report AP/IB/AICE scores in your [USC Admissions Portal](#).

# STEP 1

## PREPARE TO APPLY

### Review the essay prompts

You will be asked to respond to one of the prompts below in the USC application or Common App. This is an opportunity to tell your story and share more information about yourself in 250-650 words.

- 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.
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- Discuss an accomplishment, event or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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.

There are also two optional questions about extenuating circumstances. Answer these questions if you would like to provide more context for your application. USC cares about impacts to your health and well-being, safety, family circumstance, future plans and education.

## STEP 2

# CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT

### USC Application

To create your USC application account, follow these steps:

- Access the [USC application](#) and select the term in which you expect to start college. Then click "Start Your App."
- Select "First-time users" and then enter your email address, name and birth date on the "Register" page. We suggest using an email other than your high school email so you will have access to important messages once you graduate. A temporary, unique pin will be sent to this email.
- Enter your temporary pin and birth date on the "Login" page and create your new secure password on the "Set Password" page. Make note of your login information as you will need it to access your [USC Admissions Portal](#) and view your admission decision.
- Click on "Start New Application" and then "Create Application" and "Open Application" to begin completing the application.

Once you start your application, you can update it as many times as you want and submit it when you're ready. To continue your application:

- Access the [USC application](#) and click "24-25 Freshman" under "Your Applications."
- Click on "Open Application." Your application will appear on the page where you last left off.

### Common Application

To create your Common Application account, follow the steps in the [Application Guide for First-Time Students](#).

If you choose to complete the Common App, your [USC Admissions Portal](#) login information will be emailed to you 24-48 hours after we receive your application.

# STEP 3

## COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION

Here are some tips to help you navigate the application, regardless of which one you choose.

### **Select your term and plan**

Start by selecting the term in which you expect to begin at USC. The majority of freshmen will select the Fall 2024 entry term as a 2024-2025 freshman.

Next, familiarize yourself with our application deadlines and select your preferred admission plan. The requirements are the same whether you apply Early Action or Regular Decision, and all our admission plans are nonbinding. If you are interested in being considered for the South Carolina Honors College, we recommend applying by the Early Action deadline to give yourself one full month to complete your honors application supplement.

Finally, decide if you want your ACT or SAT scores considered as part of your admission and scholarship decisions. You have until the [credentials deadline](#) to change your testing plan through your [USC Admissions Portal](#). Refer to the credentials deadlines on page 2 based on the admission plan you selected. Remember, we superscore both the SAT and ACT, which means we will use your best subscores from different test dates to give you an overall higher score.

### **Select your major**

First, select the college your major falls under. [View our full list of colleges and majors](#). Then, select a first-choice and second-choice major. This is not a double major, but two academic programs that interest you. We will consider your first-choice major first. However, we require a second-choice major since some majors are competitive based on student's academic achievements. If you're unsure of what you want to study, you can select "Undeclared" under the College of Arts and Sciences.

### **Enter your high school information**

In this section you will complete three steps. First, add your high school information, your weighted GPA and your class rank, if available, as listed on your transcript.

Second, list your senior year schedule. Be sure to enter all the courses you will take throughout your senior year.

### **Upload your transcript**

Obtain a copy of your high school transcript, or take a clear photo if you have a paper copy. Make sure your name, high school name and your grades through your junior year are clearly displayed. You can double-check this in the preview before you upload the file.

### **Decide if you want to apply for the South Carolina Honors College**

Our top-ranked [South Carolina Honors College \(SCHC\)](#) provides a comprehensive and individualized academic experience. If you have [excellent high school grades](#) and an outstanding resume, we encourage you to apply to the SCHC. To be considered, you are required to submit the application supplement that will become available on your [USC Admissions Portal](#) after submitting your general university application. The deadline to complete the application supplement is November 15.



## STEP 3

# COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION

### Enter your additional education information

In this section, you will enter your high school graduation information, course rigor information and junior high/middle school coursework.

In the high school equivalency section, be sure to only check “yes” if you have taken or plan on taking an equivalency exam instead of graduating from high school. (e.g., GED instead of a high school diploma).

Pay close attention to the junior high/middle school coursework section. It’s important to enter any of the required courses you took in middle school that may not appear on your high school transcript. Skipping this section could delay your admission notification.

### Complete the activities/work experience section

This section allows you to list and explain up to 10 extracurricular experiences you’ve been involved in throughout high school. If you’re unsure of how many hours you participated in each activity, give us your best estimate. In the description, indicate your duties, recognitions or leadership roles. Explain the activity and your specific involvement. Remember, this section is about quality, not quantity.

### Write your essay

The essay allows you to provide information about who you are beyond the numbers. It is a great place to share more information about yourself or to further explain a topic or activity. We suggest drafting your essay outside of the application so you can review it for completeness and accuracy.

Here are a few additional tips for writing your essay:

- Be creative.
- Make it less about the topic and more about you.
- Let your personality and character shine through.
- Imagine how the person reading your essay will feel.
- Don’t feel pressure to include every detail of every experience.
- Tell a specific story rather than a generic one.
- Make sure it addresses how the experience affected or changed you.
- Write, rewrite, edit and proofread.

Remember, you can always reach out to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at 803-777-7700 if you have questions. You can also contact an [admissions representative](#).

## STEP 4

# SUBMIT THE APPLICATION FEE/WAIVER

When you have completed either the USC Application or Common Application and are ready to submit it, you will pay a \$65 nonrefundable application fee or select an approved application fee waiver. We accept SAT or ACT college application waivers, as well as NACAC, Scoir, TRIO or Common App fee waivers. Your application is not completed until this step is fulfilled.

If using an SAT or ACT fee waiver, be sure to submit the college application fee waiver and not the actual SAT or ACT test fee waiver. Students who are eligible for the SAT or ACT application fee waiver may use it to waive the application fee even if they do not report a standardized test score.

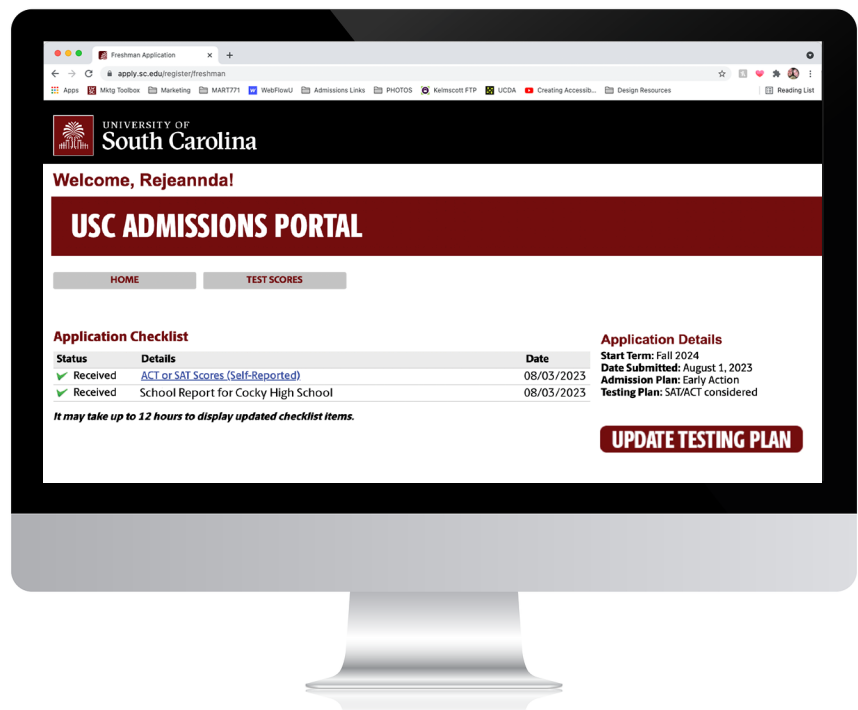
## STEP 5

# EXPLORE YOUR USC PORTAL

Your [USC Admissions Portal](#) serves as your personal landing page for important information and reminders. You will receive an email with instructions for accessing your USC Admissions Portal.

Through the portal, you can:

- Update your testing plan
- Self-report your SAT/ACT scores
- Self-report your AP/IB/AICE test scores
- Check for and upload missing credentials
- Complete any application change requests
- Connect with your admissions rep
- Check out our events
- View your admission decision
- Receive important updates



# ADMISSIONS FAQ

## Does USC accept letters of recommendation?

Letters of recommendation are not considered for general university admission. Do not send letters of recommendation unless you are applying to the South Carolina Honors College.

## How do I apply for the South Carolina Honors College?

For students who appear competitive for the South Carolina Honors College (SCHC), the application supplement will be available via the USC Admissions Portal after they apply. Students can also request the [South Carolina Honors College application supplement](#) after they apply for general admission. We recommend students interested in applying to the SCHC submit their general university application by October 15 in order to give themselves enough time to complete the Honors College application supplement by November 15. There is no additional application fee.

## How do I apply for merit-based scholarships?

Students who meet our December 1 Regular Decision deadline and have a complete application on file by January 15 are automatically considered for merit-based scholarships awarded through the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Students who wish to be considered for the university's most prestigious scholarships must also complete the Honors College application supplement by November 15.

## How do I report dual enrollment or dual credit coursework?

Credits that appear on your high school transcript may be used in the review process. To receive college credit, students who enroll must send an official transcript directly from the awarding institution.

## Can I major in pre-med, pre-law, pre-health or another pre-professional subject?

You cannot major in a pre-professional subject. Instead, you will indicate your interest in one of these tracks on the application. USC's [Office of Pre-Professional and Graduate Advising](#) offers support for interested students.

## Should I write a different essay if I am applying to more than one Common Application school?

The personal essay section will be sent to every institution that requires it in the Common Application. Pay attention to any supplemental essay prompts for different colleges and universities, and make sure you address each prompt.


## Does USC accept Cambridge (AICE) credits?


The university awards college credit for A Level courses if students earn a specific grade on the A Level exam. [View USC course equivalencies for A Level exam credit](#). Students can submit their official Cambridge International Examinations Subject Results Transcript on the [USC Admissions Portal](#).


## I completed coursework on a pass/fail basis. How will this impact my admission?

Courses with a grade of "pass" will satisfy appropriate course requirements. These will not be calculated into a student's GPA since no numeric grade is available. Additionally, we will be flexible with students missing a course requirement due to extenuating circumstances.

## OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

 Lieber College  
902 Sumter Street Access  
Columbia, SC 29208

 803-777-7700  
800-868-5872 (toll free)

 [admissions-ugrad@sc.edu](mailto:admissions-ugrad@sc.edu)

  
[@uofscadmissions](#)



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**South Carolina**

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