

# Examples of Language that Articulate the Importance of Family Responsibilities in College Admission

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Family contributions constitute a large portion of many applicants' out-of-school time and can speak to applicants' character, including their perseverance, grit, and compassion/empathy. Information about family contributions also may put the applicant's academic record in context. While most admission offices report that applicants' significant family contributions (including taking care of a family member after school or working to support the family income) are important, applicants are often hesitant to report this sensitive information due to perceived social stigma, worries about confidentiality, or not knowing/believing that these family contributions are highly valued by colleges. By stating explicitly in application instructions that substantial family commitments are valued, and by giving applicants a specific place to list these contributions (either as a separate question or by including such contributions in their list of extracurricular activities), colleges can set the record straight.

The following institutions have included explicit language in admission materials that highlight the importance of applicant family contributions. For schools that use the Common Application or Coalition Application, consider directing students to list family contributions where they normally list extracurricular activities.

## Coalition Application

This profile section collects information about your extracurricular activities. Colleges are interested in this information because it helps them understand how you spend your time when you're not in class, whether you have a job, have family responsibilities, play sports, or enjoy volunteer work.

The Coalition Application lists “family commitment” as a dropdown/category for students to report their activities/experiences.

Source <https://www.mycoalition.help/hc/en-us/articles/219110487-Activities-Experience-Section>

## Common Application

### What are family responsibilities in the activities section, and why are they important?

Family responsibilities come in many forms and can be permanent or temporary. They are different from chores in that you are meeting an important need for your family as opposed to simply lending a hand. Examples might include engaging in the following several hours every week:

- Caring for your children
- Supervising a younger sibling
- Regularly assisting a grandparent or older adult relative
- Routinely taking care of household tasks like cooking, cleaning, and running errands
- Working to provide family income

For admission officers, understanding these responsibilities is essential to understanding who you are as a person. Knowing more about your responsibilities at home also helps them put your academic and extracurricular record into context. In understanding your grades, for example, it's important for admission officers to know that time-consuming family responsibilities may have significantly reduced your time to focus on academic work.

In addition to listing your family responsibilities in the Activities section, you may also wish to share more details in your personal essay or the Additional Information section. Admission officers will value anything you share on this topic, and they will treat your personal story with respect and confidentiality.

Source <https://appsupport.commonapp.org/applicantsupport/s/article/What-are-Family-Responsibilities-in-the-Activities-section-and-why-are-they-important>

Colleges look at what you are involved in outside of class to learn about what interests you and to see that you're engaged in the world around you.

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## Georgia Institute of Technology

Students who are involved in their schools, community, and/or with their family exhibit a contribution to their community. Students' interests and responsibilities are different, and there is no correct formula for this portion of the application...

...Don't overlook research, work, family responsibilities, personal projects, etc., as important contributions you may have made during high school!

(Applicant essay question from 2018-2019): Tech's motto is Progress and Service. We find that students who ultimately have a broad impact first had a significant one at home. What is your role in your immediate or extended family? And how have you seen evidence of your impact on them?

Source <https://admission.gatech.edu/first-year/contribution-to-community>

## Susquehanna University

Susquehanna Success Application includes "family responsibilities" as an option/dropdown in "Activities."

Source <https://susqunow.org/web/>

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## University of Chicago

Colleges look at what you are involved in outside of class to learn about what interests you and to see that you're engaged in the world around you. Some students participate in organizations within their schools or in their community, some work part-time jobs or volunteer, and others have family responsibilities. Any and every one of those activities, leadership roles, and jobs should be listed on a college application.

Taking care of siblings, grandparents, and other family members is an important responsibility and can represent a significant commitment of time and effort. If family responsibilities are a significant part of your life, be sure to include them on your application.

Source <https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/apply/preparing-college>

## University of Oregon

From the University of Oregon's "Accomplishments/Activities" section of its application: To get a better sense of your interests and co-curricular involvement, please share three significant activities you were involved with during grades 9-12. This may include HS extracurricular activities and special accomplishments and can also include family responsibilities, a job you held, contributions you have made to your community, or formal programs meant to prepare you for college, such as Aspire, AVID, SEI, TRiO, Upward Bound, GEAR Up, or SAIL.

Source <https://admissions.uoregon.edu/apply>

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## University of Washington

What have you done beyond your grades and test scores? Personal achievement characteristics may include:

- Demonstrating a commitment to community service and leadership
- Exercising significant responsibility in a family, community, employment situation, or through activities
- Attaining a college preparatory education despite economic disadvantages (Washington state residents only)
- Demonstrating cultural awareness or unique perspectives or experiences

Source <https://admit.washington.edu/apply/freshman/holistic-review/>

Last reviewed July 2020.

From Ross Anderson, T. & Weissbourd, R. (2020). Character assessment in college admission: A guide of best practices with accompanying resources. Retrieved from <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu>

Access our full suite of character assessment in college admission resources: <http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-colleges/character-assessment-college-admission-guide-overview>

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