NHSI Theatre Arts Applicant Guide

The supporting materials needed to complete your application are outlined here, along with resources to help guide your formatting.

The NHSI's goal is to provide high school students with a collegiate experience, and this includes the admission process. While we understand the temptation for families to assist, **we encourage students to complete all elements of their application** so that you may know what to expect from a college admission process.

We encourage students to watch this video from Division Director George Keating to learn what he looks for in each item: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IomWvRJi7Zo

Application Components

- Resume
- Transcript
- Essays
- Letter of Recommendation
- Standardized Test Scores (*optional*)
- English Language Proficiency Test Scores (*international students*)

Resume

List all experience in theatre. If you do not already have a theatrical resume, you can reference the example provided at the end of this guide to help create your own with the following criteria:

- Name of each production (play, musical, festival, etc.)
- Your role or crew assignment
- Producing organization (high school, community theatre, professional, etc.)
- You may include any classes, camps, programs, workshops and/or skills related to the arts (singing, dancing, competitive speech, etc.)
- A theatrical resume is never more than **one page**

Transcript

Transcripts may be unofficial but must be current and include your name

- **Juniors**: Submit a transcript that includes final grades from the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, along with a current progress report
- **Sophomores**: Submit your 2025-2026 transcript and a current progress report

How to obtain your transcript:

- If you can access your transcript through an online portal, download a PDF or take a screenshot. Be sure your name is visible in the screenshot!
- If you do not have access to an online portal, ask your school counselor to give you a current copy, or have them email your transcript to nhsi@northwestern.edu

Essays

AI Policy: The committee wants to hear **your voice** through your essays, which cannot be accomplished if your essays are written by AI. Please spend time thinking about the prompts and do not rush writing the essays - **this should be the part of the application that takes the most time.** If an essay is obviously written by AI, the committee may ask you to rewrite it, or your application may be rejected outright.

Students applying for all tracks must write two essays responding to the prompts below. Students interested in being considered for the MT track must write the third essay. **Please keep your essays to one page, single spaced, 12pt font in either Times New Roman or Aptos.**

Head your essays with this information:

- Name
- Track(s) Applying for
- Essay #

Essay Prompts:

- **Essay #1:** *Write a detailed letter to your future NHSI roommate that **tells a story about yourself which illuminates something about who you are.** Maybe it's a story about something that happened to you that formed your personality. Maybe it's a story that perfectly encapsulates one aspect of your personality. Be creative! Take some time to think about what you write. You want your roommate to have a sense of what makes you, YOU! We realize that one story cannot summarize your whole personality - we are looking for a detailed story that tells us something about who you are - please do not give us a list of your likes and dislikes although you can certainly include items in your story.*

- **Essay #2:** *Describe in detail a time when you were unsuccessful in achieving your goal and how that experience altered your perspective. What did you learn from the experience? In what way has that experience changed you moving forward? This experience does not need to be traumatic or life-changing, it should just be one that offered you an opportunity to reflect and shift perspective. Please choose an experience that is not related to theatre (such as not being cast in a role, etc.)*
- **Essay #3: (Musical Theatre Applicants Only)** *What are one or two things you'd like to focus on if you are accepted into the MT Track? Why are these the things you would like to focus on? Please be specific in your answer and limit your essay to 350 words. This will preclude you from exploring different aspects of theater included in the Performance track and we want to know the reasoning for your choice. There are limited spots for the MT track, and this essay will be heavily weighted in the committee's considerations.*

Letter of Recommendation

Ask your drama teacher, recent director, or other relevant educator if they are willing to write you a letter of recommendation by the deadline. **Make sure your recommender knows you well and can advocate for you.** Letters are not shared with students.

- Obtain your recommender's email address
- Submit their contact information to us via this Recommender Form
- We will send your recommender instructions for writing & sending their letter
    - *Please check in with your recommender about a week after submitting the Recommender Form to make sure they received our instructions in their inbox/spam/junk.*
- **At least one letter of recommendation is required**, but we will accept up to two from different recommenders.

Optional: Standardized Test Scores

If you have taken any standardized tests (PSAT, SAT, PLAN, or ACT) you can submit a copy of your scores. **Do not submit SAT/PSAT scores under 1200; do not submit ACT scores under 29.**

- We CAN accept screenshots.
- Test score reports must include the student's name and results in the same document or image.

- Note: CollegeBoard does NOT have an NHSI option for sending results. Sending results via CollegeBoard to Northwestern University will deliver your scores to Undergraduate Admissions, NOT the National High School Institute.

International Students Only: English Language Proficiency Test

If English is not your first language, we must receive evidence of your speaking proficiency in English. You must submit an English Language test score, such as a TOEFL, IELTS, or the Duolingo English Test. The minimum TOEFL score required is 105.

- Emphasis is placed on the speaking score
- The SAT/ACT do not test speaking ability and thus will not be accepted to fulfill this requirement
- If you have not yet taken an English Language test, please arrange to take one in time for the admission deadline
    - *Duolingo offers a test without appointments, with results available in 1-2 days for an added fee*
- Exceptions can be *considered* for international students who attend high school in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom. Please email our office to inquire: nhsi@northwestern.edu

***SAMPLE* STUDENT PERFORMANCE RESUME**

Billy Budd
billybudd@hotmail.com
www.billybudd.com

Hgt: 6'0"
Wgt: 160

Eyes: Brown
Hair: Blue

Professional Theatre

Death of a Salesman	Biff	Flat Rock Playhouse
My Fair Lady	Freddie	Interact Theatre
Carnival	Ensemble	Alabama Shakes. Festival

University Theatre

The Crucible (fight capt.)	Parris	University of Alabama (UA)
Hamlet	Laertes	UA
Safe Sex	Arthur	UA
Mad Dog Blues	Coby	UA
Kail House Rock	Ensemble	UA
Lysistrata	Ensemble	UA
Bent (Irene Ryan Nom.)	Wolf	York Tech. College

Film and Television

The Patriot	Extra	Universal
Dawson's Creek	U5	Fox
Release	Ted	AU Student Film

Special Skills

Dialects	Standard British, Southern, Irish
Combat	Recognized SAFD Combatant
Dance	Jazz (5 yrs.), Tap (7 yrs.), Modern (2 yrs.)
Singing	Lyric Baritone, Private Voice (3 yrs.)
Technical	Scene Painting, Carpentry, Props, Publicity
Additional	Juggling, Horses (western)

Education

B.F.A. Candidate	Theatre, University of Alabama
Workshops	Auditioning (Edward Albee), Shakespeare (Tina Packer)

***SAMPLE* STUDENT TECH RESUME**

Billy Budd
billybudd@hotmail.com
www.billybudd.com

Professional Theatre

Death of a Salesman	Stage Manager	Flat Rock Playhouse
My Fair Lady	Asst. Stage Manager	Interact Theatre
Carnival	Props Design	Alabama Shakes. Festival

University Theatre

The Crucible (fight capt.)	FlyMaster	University of Alabama (UA)
Hamlet	Scenic Painter	UA
Safe Sex	Set Construction	UA
Mad Dog Blues	Spotlight Operator	UA
Kail House Rock	Prop Crew	UA
Lysistrata	Puppeteer	UA
Bent (Irene Ryan Nom.)	Asst. Stage Manager	York Tech. College

Film and Television

The Patriot	Extra	Universal
Dawson's Creek	Production Assistant	Fox
Release	Production Assistant	AU Student Film

Special Skills

Dialects	Standard British, Southern, Irish
Combat	Recognized SAFD Combatant
Dance	Jazz (5 yrs.), Tap (7 yrs.), Modern (2 yrs.)
Singing	Lyric Baritone, Private Voice (3 yrs.)
Technical	Scene Painting, Carpentry, Props, Puppetry
Additional	Juggling, Horses (western)

Education

B.F.A. Candidate	Theatre, University of Alabama
Workshops	Auditioning (Edward Albee), Shakespeare (Tina Packer)