Application checklists + portfolio guidelines
for first-year applicants

Preparing for the early decision RISD application timeline: November 1

May

- Review the [Common App requirements](#) and [essay prompts options](#).
- Begin scholarship hunting.
  - Check in with your guidance counselor about scholarship options and check out the [College Board Scholarship Search](#).
- Begin compiling materials for the Common App. You will need:
  1. A copy of your latest high school transcript
  2. A list of activities, work, and family responsibilities
  3. Test scores and dates from your college entrance exams (SATs, ACTs, etc) (Please note that RISD is test-optional)
  4. Parent/Legal Guardian information
  5. Academic honors and achievements
- Get a free online portfolio review by RISD admissions at [aicad.slideroom.com](#).
  - Once you receive feedback, it's a good idea to review your work and think about actionable steps you can take to improve your portfolio.

June

- Determine and review application requirements and deadlines. For RISD, you can find the application requirement [here](#).
- Review portfolio line up. Some questions to ask yourself at this stage:
  - How many strong, complete works do I have finished?
  - How many more will I need to complete the minimum portfolio requirements?
  - What are some things I can do to push my portfolio in the next few months?
- Begin writing the [Common App essay](#).

August

- Have your Common App essay reviewed by a mentor, counselor, teacher, or parent/guardian.
  - It's a good idea to get multiple perspectives and different feedback on essays.
  - The more eyes on your essay, the better.
- Identify and ask potential recommenders for recommendation letters.
  - RISD requires a minimum of one and a maximum of three.
  - Letters can come from your favorite teacher, a helpful guidance counselor, a coach, mentor, or work manager.
- Begin organizing and curating your portfolio:
  - Identify the final works to include in your portfolio.

- o   Identify actionable things you can work on to strengthen your portfolio.
  - o   In a pinch, a dynamic still life or observational drawing is always a good thing to add into your portfolio.
- Review the [National Portfolio Day schedule](#) to see when we'll be reviewing portfolios near you

September

- Begin filling out the Common App.
- Make final edits to your Common App essay.
- Have your school send official transcripts to the Admissions Office, either electronically through the Common Application, Parchment or email, or by mail.
- Check in on your recommenders. This is a good time to:
  - o   Remind them of the application deadline.
  - o   Offer any additional information that might help them write a good recommendation.
- Begin documenting and organizing your portfolio.

October

- Complete the Common App.
- Complete the FAFSA and institutional financial aid form (through the Admissions applicant status portal) for financial aid.
- Reference the RISD application requirement checklist below. This will help you ensure that you have completed and submitted all the required documents for the RISD application.
- Finalize and submit your 12-20 portfolio slides through SlideRoom.
- Confirm that all recommendation letters have been submitted.
- Tip: try not to wait until the day before the deadline to submit your application and portfolio!
- Please note that applying for Early Decision indicates a commitment to attend if admitted.

Preparing for the regular decision RISD application deadline: January 16

September

- Determine and review application requirements and deadlines. You can find our application requirements [here](#).
- Review the [Common App requirements](#) and [essay prompts options](#).
- Begin compiling materials for the Common App. You will need:
    1. A copy of your latest high school transcript
    2. A list of activities, work, and family responsibilities
    3. Test scores and dates from your college entrance exams (SATs, ACTs, etc) (Please note that RISD is test-optional)
    4. Parent/Legal Guardian information
    5. Academic honors and achievements
    6. Letter(s) of recommendation
- Begin scholarship hunting:
    - Check in with your guidance counselor about scholarship options, and check out the [College Board Scholarship Search](#).
- Review potential portfolio pieces. Some questions to ask yourself at this stage:
    1. How many strong, complete works do I have finished?
    2. How many more will I need to complete the minimum portfolio requirements?
    3. What are some things I can do to push or enhance my portfolio in the next few months?

October

- Begin writing the [Common App college essay](#)
- Get a free online portfolio review from a member of the RISD admissions staff at [aicad.slideroom.com](#).
    - Once you receive feedback, it's a good idea to review your work and think about actionable steps you can take to improve your portfolio.
- Identify and ask potential recommenders for recommendation letters.
    - RISD requires a minimum of one and a maximum of three letters.
    - Letters can come from your favorite teacher, a helpful guidance counselor, a coach, mentor, or work manager.

November

- Have your Common App essay reviewed by a mentor, counselor, teacher, or parent/guardian

- o It's a good idea to get multiple perspectives and different feedback. The more eyes on your essay, the better.
- Begin filling out the Common App.
- Begin organizing and curating your portfolio:
  - o Identify the work you'll include in your portfolio.
  - o Identify actionable things you can work on to strengthen your portfolio.
  - o In a pinch, a dynamic still life or observational drawing is always a good thing to add to your portfolio.

December

- Make final edits to your Common App essay.
- Complete the Common App.
- Complete the FAFSA and institutional financial aid form (through the Admissions applicant status portal) for Financial Aid.
- Have your school send official transcripts to the Admissions Office, either electronically through the Common Application, Parchment or email, or by mail.
- Check in with your recommenders. This is a good time to:
  - o Remind them of the application deadline.
  - o Offer any additional information that might help them write a good recommendation.
- Begin documenting and organizing your portfolio.

January

- Review the RISD application requirement checklist attached below. This will help you ensure that you have completed and submitted all the required documents for the RISD application.
- Finalize and submit your 12-20 portfolio slides through SlideRoom.
- Confirm that all recommendation letters have been submitted.
- Tip: try not to wait until the day before the deadline to submit your application and portfolio!

RISD application requirement checklist

Below is a checklist to better help you complete your application. All these elements of the application and portfolio should be submitted by one of the following deadlines:

Early Decision Deadline: November 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: January 16th

❏ Complete the Common app:

 ❏ Submit the Common App essay
 ❏ List your parent/ Guardian information
 ❏ List your activities, work and family responsibilities
 ❏ List your extracurriculars
 ❏ List your academic honors and achievements
 ❏ Complete the RISD Supplemental Questionnaire

❏ Have your school send official transcripts to the Admissions Office, either electronically (through the Common Application, Parchment or email) or by mail.

❏ Upload your portfolio through SlideRoom, including 12-20 images of your strongest and most recent works (Applicants must begin their Common Application before they are able to gain access to their RISD SlideRoom account).

❏ Submit your FAFSA (You should fill this out to be considered for federal financial aid. Note: US citizens/permanent residents only).

❏ Submit your institutional financial aid form through the Admissions applicant status portal (Both US citizens/permanent residents and international students should fill this out to be considered for federal financial aid).

❏ Confirm that your recommendation letters have been submitted (minimum one recommendation letter, maximum three). You can do this inside of your applicant status portal, which you received a link to via email upon completion of your Common Application. Please keep in mind that there is a short processing time.

❏ If you are submitting as a Brown|RISD Dual Degree applicant, submit the Brown|RISD Dual Degree supplemental essay to both institutions. You can learn more about BRDD here.

RISD portfolio tips and strategies

All first-year students begin their RISD education in the [Experimental and Foundation Studies](#) (EFS) program and declare their major at the end of their first year. This means that you won't be applying directly to a degree program. When putting your portfolio together, it's a good idea to consider general values that we hold near: exploration, process, discovery, conceptual thought, creative problem-solving, and skill

General requirements and tips for a strong RISD portfolio

- 12-20 of your recent, best works for your portfolio. We value quality over quantity, so be sure to edit down to your strongest pieces.
- RISD looks for art that has a point of view. Show us what inspires you! We like to see developed concepts and evocative ideas, not just technical exercises. Consider how you can use your technical skill to convey an interesting idea.
- It's a good idea to include more than one kind of art form. While RISD does not require work in any particular medium, we value experimentation with different materials and mediums, taking risks, and going beyond obvious solutions.
- Drawing is an integral part of any creative practice. We recommend including some pieces based on direct observation. This means working from real-life people, objects, and places in front of you. We discourage drawing from photographs and videos in general, as this often leads to flattened or distorted drawings.
- We want every piece in your portfolio to be your own creation, so we discourage including master copies, fan art and hyper-stylized cartooning. Character design is great to include, just be sure they're your own creations and not based on anyone else's stories or characters. We specifically discourage anime since it is such an established, recognizable style, and very difficult to work your own voice to.

Questions to ask yourself

- Is your work highlighting your interests, personality, passion or identity? If not, how can you elevate this in your pieces?
- How have you grown as an artist, and do the pieces you've selected demonstrate this growth?
- Is ambition present? Does your work show risk-taking or breaking out of your comfort zone?
- How are you exploring mediums and ideas?
- Are you documenting your work in a clear way?

Strategies to document your work

Are you showing your work in the best way possible? Always consider:

- The lighting conditions on your work.
- Perspective in your documentation. Consider: are detail shots important or can you best represent the essence of the piece through a single, front-facing shot?
- The background behind your piece: we recommend little to no distraction behind your piece, if the background is not important to the context of your work.

Recommended file formats

Our recommended file formats are: jpeg, png, gif, mp4 and mov. These formats are most compatible with SlideRoom. Google Drive, zipped files, and multiple page PDFs are not recommended formats for sharing your artwork.
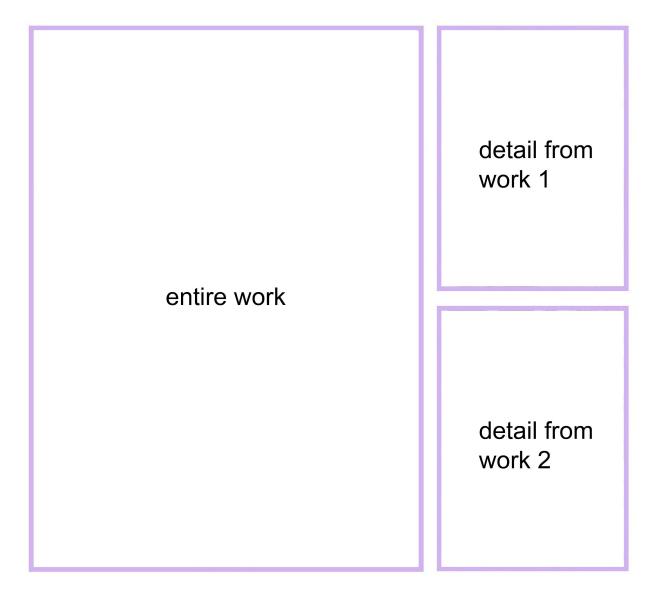
Recommended display formats

- It is unnecessary to submit process images for standard drawing or paintings.
- If you choose to submit composite slide formats, do not insert more than four images into a single slide.

Standard image format: single, front-facing image

entire work

detail from work 1

detail from work 2

Format to use if you want to showcase details or process

Formats we do not recommend

- Photography with a distracting background (example below).
- Photography with poor lighting that does not clearly show work (example below).
- Cluttered, image heavy slides (example below).
- Text descriptions in slides (example below).
- Header, footers, and index pages.
- Multi-page PDFs, unless you're showing a book.