



Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
Admissions Office
Devonshire Administrative Center, Suite 9
2831 Graham Road
Falls Church, VA 22042

**Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
Class of 2014 Admissions**

**Freshman Admissions –The Semifinalist Round in a Nutshell
Information and Suggestions for Completion of the Student Information Sheet,
Teacher Recommendations & the Counselor Information Sheet**

Congratulations on becoming a semifinalist! You are now beginning the second round of the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) admissions process.

When you were notified that you had achieved semifinalist status, you were provided several forms to be completed either by you or by your teachers. These forms included:

- A Counselor Information Sheet (for you to complete, sign, and return immediately to the TJ liaison counselor at your middle school);
- Two Teacher Recommendation forms (to be filled out by two of your teachers); and
- Instructions for Semifinalists, which includes information on how to complete your Student Information Sheet (to be completed electronically).

The teacher recommendations and the Information Sheet will be used to evaluate all semifinalists. Evaluations of those components will be considered with the following to determine the Class of 2014 math score on the TJ admissions test; scores on the two essays you wrote (most students wrote their essays at the December 2009 test administration); and final 7th grade report card marks and first and second quarter 8th grade report card marks in math and science.

We provide in this packet of materials some suggestions and hints to help you navigate the second round of the TJHSST admissions process. We have focused particularly on answering the most commonly-asked questions we receive regarding teacher recommendations and the Information Sheet. We also have included some answers to commonly-asked questions regarding the admissions process (final decisions, notification, etc.). If you have a question that is not answered here, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please pay attention to deadlines and plan ahead to ensure that your application packet is complete.

Good luck!

- TJHSST Admissions Office

Counselor Information Sheet General Information

The Counselor Information Sheet is designed to provide the contact information your school's TJ liaison counselor needs to coordinate your final application papers. You must identify the two individuals who will be writing your teacher recommendations (math or science teacher and "other" teacher). Please print clearly when you fill out the Sheet and fill the form out completely.

Complete the Counselor Information Sheet immediately and give it to the counselor (or principal) who is the designated TJ Admissions contact at your school.

If you are using a teacher recommendation from a teacher who is NOT at your present school, please indicate where that teacher is located (address, e-mail, and/or telephone number).

Applicant Signature/Affirmation

You and your parent (or legal guardian) must affirm, sign, and date the Counselor Information Sheet in the bottom box before you hand it in. Please read the contents of this box (see example below) carefully before you sign it.

From the Counselor Information Sheet:

APPLICANT/PARENT: Please affirm and sign.			
If any of the above-referenced people are not at my school, I will give them the recommendation form and a stamped envelope addressed to: TJHSST Admissions Office, P.O. Box 3300, Merrifield, VA 22116-3300.			
I also understand that this form must be completed and returned to my liaison counselor/principal immediately , and that the completed Student Information Sheet is due to the liaison counselor/principal at my school by NO LATER THAN Monday, March 15, 2010.			
_____	_ / _ / 10	_____	_ / _ / 10
Applicant's Signature	Date	Parent's/Guardian's Signature	Date

Teacher Recommendations Questions and Answers for Applicants

All semifinalists applying for admission to the freshman class (9th grade) at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) must provide the Admissions Office with two teacher recommendations:

- one from a science or math teacher, and
- one from another teacher, school principal, or counselor (your “other” recommendation).

The teachers should be individuals who have taught, or worked with, you in the 7th or 8th grade.

You have been provided with two blank recommendation forms AND two instruction sheets to give to your teachers. Please fill in your name in the designated blank line on the instructions sheet and fill in your name, present school on both sides of the actual recommendation form before you give them to your teachers.

Teachers have the ability to complete their recommendations electronically on the admissions website and many may do so. However, even if your teachers opt to complete the form electronically, you still should give each teacher one of the forms you have been given from the Admissions Office so that the teacher can keep track of the recommendations he or she is writing (and so the teacher won't forget to write yours).

General Questions Regarding Teacher Recommendations

Q: When should I ask my teachers for recommendations?

You should request recommendations immediately. Teachers have only about three weeks to complete the recommendations and many teachers are asked to write recommendations for a number of students. Your teachers, therefore, will appreciate being given as much time as possible to write you a good, thorough recommendation. A teacher may not be able to write a thorough recommendation for you if you ask at the last minute.

Please ask politely and thank your teachers for the time and effort they will expend on your behalf.

Q: Which teachers should I ask?

One of your recommendations must come from your 7th or 8th grade math or science teacher. The other teacher can be any teacher of your choice. You should select teachers who know you well and can speak well of you, teachers who also can complete all sections of the form and answer all of the questions posed, and teachers who also can provide a detailed narrative response as requested on page two of the recommendation form.

Q: Can I ask two math teachers (or two science teachers) to write recommendations for me?

You may ask two math or science teachers to write recommendations for you, but you are not required to do so. If you use two math or science teachers (or a math and science teacher), one of those teachers would write the required “math/science” recommendation and the second teacher could write your “other” recommendation.

There is no particular benefit in having two math or science teachers (or a combination of the two) write your teacher recommendations (*i.e.*, you do not get “extra points” simply because of the choice of teachers). It is far more important for you to have two teachers write for you who can answer all of the questions posed on the form (including providing a narrative response on page two of the form) and who know you well and can speak well about you.

Please be aware that, because one recommendation must be written by a math or science teacher, many math and science teachers will be writing a lot of recommendations for their students. This takes time. Those teachers, therefore, may not be able to write “other” recommendations for additional students. Make sure you have another teacher in mind to ask if you need to select another teacher as your “other” recommendation.

Q: Do I need to ask my current teachers?

Students may request recommendations from seventh and/or eighth grade teachers. While we prefer that at least one of the teachers writing your science or math recommendation be a present eighth grade teacher, you may ask two seventh grade teachers to write those recommendations.

Q: How about asking my scout leader, or my piano teacher, to write my “other” recommendation?

Your “other,” recommendation is best written by someone who knows you well, and who can evaluate your academic performance, how you work in groups, and your classroom behavior, and who also can fill out all of the items on page one of the recommendation form and provide the narrative response required on page two of the form. A scout leader or piano teacher, therefore, may not be your best choice. A scout leader, for example, may not have any personal experience to evaluate your academic performance and a piano teacher, or anyone else who works with you one-to-one, cannot evaluate how you work in groups. A better choice for your “other” recommendation might be: a current teacher (or a seventh grade teacher) you have in another subject at school; a teacher who supervises an extracurricular activity (for example, Math Club) in which you are actively involved at school; a teacher you have in a program outside of school (for example, a summer school program); your counselor; or your school principal (if he or she can really provide all the information the recommendation seeks).

Q: How can I assist my teacher in writing a good, thorough recommendation for me?

When you ask a teacher to write your recommendation, have a conversation with the teacher. Make sure that the teacher is willing and able to write a recommendation for you and feels that he/she can complete all sections of the form (page one and two). Ask your teacher whether there is any additional information you can provide him or her to assist in writing your recommendation. You might want to remind your teacher of any special projects or activities you completed in his or her class (not outside of his or her class) so that the teacher has detailed information to use when completing the form. (This is especially recommended for 7th grade teachers, who may remember you quite well but may not recall the topic of the science fair project you did over a year ago.)

Q: Can I submit more than two teacher recommendations?

No. You may only have two teacher recommendations submitted for consideration by the selection committees so do not ask more than two teachers to complete your forms.

Q: Do I need to mail in the teacher recommendations?

Teachers are instructed on the recommendation form to return the completed form to the designated counselor/principal at your school who oversees TJ admissions, or to send the recommendation to the TJHSST Admissions Office.

If there is no designated counselor or principal for TJ admissions at your school, or you are asking for a recommendation from a teacher who is not at your school (for example, a summer school teacher), as a courtesy to the teacher, you should provide the teacher with a stamped envelope, addressed to:

TJHSST Admissions Office
P.O. Box 3300
Merrifield, VA 22116-3300

The teacher then can mail the recommendation directly to the TJ Admissions Office.

DATES & DEADLINES TO REMEMBER	
Counselor Info Sheet Due	Immediately
Student Information Sheet Due	March 15, 2010 (Monday)
Teacher Recommendations Due (must be completed by teacher by this date)	March 15, 2010
Notification Letters Postmarked	April 30, 2010 (Friday)

Completing Your Student Information Sheet

All semifinalists applying for admission to the freshman class (9th grade) at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) must provide the Admissions Office with a completed Student Information Sheet (SIS) for evaluation by our selection committee members. The form will be considered along with your teacher recommendations, essay scores, math admissions test score, and math and science marks to determine the Class of 2014 at TJHSST.

The SIS is your opportunity to provide information regarding you and your interests to the committee members who will read the forms. The selection committees will use your SIS to get an idea about who you are, what your interests are, and what you have learned from your various experiences over the past few years, so that they can determine how strong a candidate you are for admission to TJ. We, therefore, want to know how you would describe yourself and what activities and interests are most important to you.

You must go online to www.TJAdmissions.org for the Instructions on how to complete the two-page SIS (go to the "Resources" page). You then must complete the form online, print out your completed form, sign it, and submit the form. Plan ahead.

Please read and follow all directions carefully and answer each question that is posed, as it is posed. We are not looking for lists of everything you have done in the last few years, so when we ask you to describe "one" we mean "one." We are looking for specific, detailed, truthful answers that show you have considered the question and taken some time to reflect on your final answer.

We strongly urge you take some time reviewing the instructions (pay special attention to the TJHSST policy and mission statement) and the form before you begin working on your responses. Take your time. (You may want to do several drafts before you complete your final submission.) Make sure you answer the specific questions that are posed. Proofread your document before you submit the form.

Nuts and Bolts: General Questions Regarding the Information Sheet

Q: Do I have to use the form provided by the Admissions Office?

Yes. The SIS must be completed on the official form provided at www.TJAdmissions.org. **Do not alter this form in any way.**

Q: Do I have to fill out the form online?

Yes. If you do not have access to a computer, contact the TJ liaison counselor at your middle school and he/she will make sure that you have access to a computer and printer to complete this form.

PLAN AHEAD. Do not wait until the last minute to complete your form. Sometimes last-minute emergencies arise (for example, websites sometimes are not available, printers run out of ink, the power can go out at your home, snow days can be called) that make you wish you had started your project sooner rather than later. Remember, your forms are due to the liaison counselor at your middle school by no later than Monday, March 15, 2010. Plan accordingly.

Q: Can I write on the back of the Information Sheet or attach another sheet of paper to the Information Sheet?

No. You must fit everything you write into the boxes provided. You may not continue onto the back of the Information Sheet. You also may not include attachments to the Information Sheet. If you are running out

of space, then you need to take some time to further edit your response. Remember: Selection committee members will only read the information provided within the boxes on the SIS. Nothing additional can, or will, be considered.

Q: Can my parents (or another adult, or my sibling) help me with my Information Sheet?

When you complete your Student Information Sheet, you must affirm to us that everything you have written on your Information Sheet is truthful and that you alone composed and completed the Sheet. No one other than you should be writing or working on YOUR Student Information Sheet. (And, by the way, when parents do “help,” we can tell!)

Q: Do I need to mail in my Information Sheet?

If you attend a public school (or if you attend a private school that has a designated TJ contact, *i.e.*, the person to whom you turned in your application), **you should return your Information Sheet to the designated counselor/principal at your school who oversees TJ admissions** by the deadline you have been given (the counselor may give you an earlier deadline than our final deadline for his/her own scheduling purposes). The counselor will be coordinating all of your new semifinalist materials (Information Sheet and teacher recommendations) and will return all of your forms to the Admissions Office. **We prefer that you give everything to your liaison counselor.** They help us keep track of the thousands of pieces of paper we receive at this time.

If there is no designated counselor or principal for TJ admissions at your school, you can mail your Information Sheet to:

TJHSST Admissions Office
P.O. Box 3300
Merrifield, VA 22116-3300

Make a copy of your SIS for your records before you turn it in or mail it!

You also can hand-deliver your Information Sheet to the Admissions Office. We are located in the Devonshire Administrative Center, Suite 9, 2831 Graham Road, Falls Church, VA 22042, and are open Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Do not leave any materials at the Admissions Office if there is no one from the office there to accept them.

Q: How will I know if you received my Information Sheet?

If you give your Information Sheet to the liaison counselor at your school, we will get the form. The counselors are very careful and reliable. If you do not have a liaison counselor at your school and you are mailing the Sheet, send the form certified-mail, return-receipt requested, or ask for Delivery Confirmation, if you want to know if we received your Sheet.

Please do not call the admissions office to check on whether or not your forms have been received. If any of your forms are missing, we will contact you.

Getting Started on Your Student Information Sheet

The new SIS includes three sections: (1) four short answer questions; (2) three boxes that ask you to describe in detail your one most important accomplishment, academic activity/interest, and after-school/out-of-school activity/interest **from grades 6, 7, and 8 only**; and (3) a personal statement (with prompt). The step-by-step guidelines below will help you get started on preparing these important sections of your form.

- First, go to the “Resources” page at www.TJAdmissions.org, and read the Student Information Sheet Instructions carefully. Make sure that you follow these directions as you prepare your Information Sheet.
- Then, begin working on a draft of your responses to the questions/prompts posed. We suggest that you go online and print out copies of the blank SIS form and start working on a draft before you begin typing your final copy.
- Begin by jotting down your ideas for your responses to each section. Think carefully about how you are going to respond. A good way to start is to imagine you are sitting in an interview and someone is asking you the questions - - how would you respond? Then, state out loud what you would give as your answer. Then, write down what you just said. Do you like what you said? Were you clear?
- Then, begin refining what you have written. Remember to keep the TJHSST Mission (included on the instructions page) in mind as you prepare this important document.
- Take your time. You do not want to submit a “first draft” of your SIS. You want to make sure that you have provided detailed information that provides the selection committees with as much information as possible (given the space restraints) about you and your most important interests, activities, and/or accomplishments. Don’t forget to proofread before you print, sign, and submit your form.

Commonly-Asked Questions about Activities, Interests and Accomplishments

Q: Do I have to include only school-related or other organized activities?

No. You can discuss school-related activities/interests, such as classroom projects, science fair projects, participation in school clubs (such as the math or science team), and organized activities/interests outside of school, such as computer courses, special summer programs, sports teams, music lessons, etc. You also can discuss activities/interests you participate in on your own that can demonstrate your interest and activities in various subject areas, such as reading science magazines monthly, doing independent research in an area that fascinates you, teaching yourself (or someone else) a new skill, hobbies, jobs, etc. Organized activities/interests do not carry any greater weight or significance to the selection committees than self-initiated activities/interests that you pursue on your own.

Just remember to answer the questions posed, as they are posed, and to provide detailed explanations and descriptions so that your choices are clear.

Remember as well to keep the TJHSST policy and mission statement in mind as you complete the form.

Q: What is the TJ Mission?

You can find the TJ Mission in the *Information for Applicants 2009-2010* brochure and on the Student Information Instructions on the admissions website.

Q: How detailed should I be?

You should provide as much detail as possible in response to the questions posed and regarding each activity, accomplishment, or interest that you describe, keeping in mind that your responses all must fit within the boxes on the form. An entry that merely states: "I was on the Math Team in 8th grade," or "I did a project on cells in my 7th grade science class" is not complete. Describe what you do on the math team, how often you meet and compete, and what you enjoy about the team. Describe the class project, what your specific topic was, what research you did, and/or what you learned.

Q: Can I list more than one activity, interest, or accomplishment in the second section of the form?

No. The second section of the form asks you to identify your **ONE most important** accomplishment, academic activity/interest, and after-school/our-of-school activity/interest.

Do not list activities/interests. Do not use broad categories (e.g., do not say your most important academic activity is "math" and go on to list everything math-related you have done in the past). We are not interested in a "laundry list" of everything you may have done over the past few years. **We want you to think and reflect before you answer and then to provide a response with detailed information that gives us a clear understanding of what your most important activities/interests and accomplishments are and why the one accomplishment and interest/activity you have selected in each section of the form is important to you (not to anyone else, to YOU).**

Q: Do I have to fill out the entire form? Will I hurt my chances for admission if I do not complete every section?

You should try not to leave any section completely blank, but if you really do not have anything to include under a particular section, do not make something up just to fill the space. Every response on your Information Sheet must be truthful.

Q: Can I reconfigure the Information Sheet?

No. The form should not be altered in any way. If the form is altered, it will be returned to you to complete again. If you reconfigure the form, the form will be returned to you to complete correctly.

Preparing the Personal Statement

The personal statement is your opportunity to tell the selection committees why you want to attend a high school that has a focus in science, math, and technology (not why you want to come to TJ). You must respond to the following question:

“Why do you want to attend a high school that has a math, science, and technology focus?”

Before you begin writing, spend some time thinking about how you will answer this question and outline your thoughts. You might want to look at the brochure you received with your application, *Information for Applicants 2009-2010*, or at the TJ Website (www.tjhsst.edu) to help you during this process.

Then, write at least one rough draft of your statement. Don't worry about the word limit at this drafting stage; just get your thoughts down on paper. Then, you can begin to edit and refine your statement so that it says what you want it to say in a clear and concise manner.

Filling Out and Entering Your Responses

Once you have done at least one draft of your SIS, and you are satisfied with what you have written, it is time to fill out the actual form online. The Student Information Sheet that you must complete online is a fillable PDF form, which means that you can type your information into each section of the form in the appropriate places. The form has been formatted to make sure that you can stay within the boxes provided in each section of the form. If your words get cut off, you will need to edit your response so that it is contained in the box provided for that response.

Please keep the following pieces of information in mind as you complete this task:

- You must complete the form electronically online at www.TJAdmissions.org. You may not hand write or cut-and-paste entries onto the sheet.
- **If you do not have access to a computer at home**, contact the TJ Liaison Counselor at your school for assistance.
- **Everything you write must fit into the boxes provided. DO NOT continue on the back of the page and DO NOT provide any attachments.**
- **Once you have entered all of your responses, PROOFREAD** everything carefully (don't just do “spell check”) for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- **DO NOT ALTER THIS FORM IN ANY WAY.** Do not reformat the form or change the font size.
- Once you have completed the form online, print out a copy (or copies), SIGN your completed Student Information Sheet, and turn it (2 pages) in to the TJHSST Liaison Counselor at your middle school. **If your school has a liaison counselor, you MUST turn the Student Information Sheet in to the counselor.**
- **Make sure you keep a copy of your completed form for your records.**

Please be aware that unless you have Adobe Acrobat Professional on your computer, you cannot save your filled form. So, make sure you print copies before you exit from the document.

Applicant Affirmation

Before you submit your form to the TJ liaison counselor at your school, you must sign the Information Sheet in the space provided at the bottom of the page and affirm that everything you said is truthful **and that you prepared your SIS by yourself**. The affirmation states:

My signature below certifies that all the above responses are truthful and that I have composed and completed this sheet by myself.

Double-check to make sure that you have signed the sheet before you turn it in. If the Admissions Office receives an unsigned form, you will be called to come to the Admissions Office to sign the form.

Answers to Commonly-Asked Questions About the Admissions Process: What Happens Now?

Q: Where are my test scores?

You will receive your test scores once you have completed the admissions process in April 2010. The only students who receive test scores in February 2010 are students who are not in the semifinalist pool.

Q: How many students will you admit?

The regulation that governs TJ Admissions provides:

Each year TJHSST will admit approximately 480 ninth grade students who have committed to an intensive program focused on math, science, and technology.

Q: How are students selected for admission?

Students will be evaluated based on the following:

- Evaluation of student-authored Student Information Sheet;
- Evaluation of two teacher recommendations;
- Evaluation of two student-authored essays;
- Final 7th grade marks and first and second quarter 8th grade marks in math and science; and
- Math Score on the admissions test.

No other materials are considered in any student's application packet under any circumstances.

The entire application packet is evaluated holistically for admission based on Policy 3355.2, Regulation 3355.9, the TJHSST Mission Statement and Beliefs, and the following criteria:

- Aptitude for successful study of science, mathematics, computer science, and related technological fields.
- Record of prior academic achievement.
- Interest and motivation in the study of science, mathematics, computer science, and related technologies.
- Background, skills, or experiences that promote the School Board's goal of providing diversity in the student body to enhance a unique learning experience and to develop future leaders.

Once the essay readers and selection committee members have completed their evaluations, students will be admitted based on the strength of their final evaluation until we have approximately 480 students.

If, when we reach that point, we have semifinalists with the same final evaluation scores where we can admit some, but not all, of those students (to have 480 admitted students), a lottery will be used to determine the final students offered admission. The remaining students will be the first students placed on a waiting list to be used in July 2010 if spaces are available.

Q: When will I find out whether I have been admitted?

We will mail letters notifying all semifinalists whether or not they will be offered admission to TJHSST on April 30, 2010 (postmark date). We may mail before that date, but expect to mail no later than April 30, 2010. When the letters are in the mail, we will post an announcement on the “News” page of our website.

Q: I really, really want to know if I got in. Can I call you (or e-mail you) to find out?

No. We do not give decisions over the telephone or via e-mail.

Q: What if I don't get my letter?

First, give it some time. Mail delivery varies in Northern Virginia and some students will get their letters the day after we mail them, and some students may not get their letters until many days after that. (If you have recently moved, please make sure that you notify the Admissions Office of your change of address so that you get your letter.)

If you have not received your letter by Thursday, May 6, 2010, your parent/legal guardian should call the Admissions Office (703-876-5265). DO NOT CALL BEFORE THAT DATE.

We do not provide admissions decisions to students. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) listed on your application must call.

Q: Do I have to come to TJ if I am admitted?

If you are admitted, we certainly hope that you will come to TJ. However, you are not required to attend TJHSST. You will have time after you get your admissions offer to learn more about the school before you have to make a final decision. Freshmen will not register for courses until June 2010.

TJ also hosts a Preview Night for all admitted students the week before registration, where you can meet your new classmates, talk to TJ students and teachers about activities, and learn more about the school. Preview Night (which will be in mid-May 2010) is a fun night that includes your first TJ Pep Rally.

More information regarding these events will be provided in the materials that accompany the final notification letter in late April 2010.

Q: Because everyone who is admitted does not decide to go to TJ, do you have a wait list to fill their spaces in the Class of 2014?

Yes. This year, for the first time, we will have a wait list of 50 students who may be offered admission to the Class of 2014 in July 2010 if spaces are still available.

We admit up to the total number of students we can (480) in the winter round of admissions with the knowledge that not all of those students will decide to attend TJ. We use the spaces that open up when students decide not to come to TJ for our summer round of admissions. (By regulation, we have to have seats available for the students who are eligible to apply to the freshman class through “summer round,” which takes place in June each year.)