



The Common Application & the COVID-19 Essay

COVID-19 has impacted all of our lives. Recognizing this, the Common App added an optional 250-word essay that will give students a chance to share with colleges and universities how the pandemic has impacted them.

The Common App's COVID-19 essay prompt and questions:

“Community disruptions such as COVID-19 and natural disasters can have deep and long-lasting impacts. If you need it, this space is yours to describe those impacts. Colleges care about the effects on your health and well-being, safety, family circumstances, future plans, and education, including access to reliable technology and quiet study spaces.

Do you wish to share anything on this topic? Y/N

Please use this space to describe how these events have impacted you.”

The question will be optional and will appear in the Additional Information section of the application. The response length will be limited to 250 words.

It's optional. Should you write about the coronavirus pandemic?

The pandemic has a lasting impact on the education and everyday lives of many high school students. If you have lived through a hardship, learned something new, started a project, or gained a perspective that changed your major or career choice, sharing your experience in the COVID-19 essay is a good idea. The essay gives colleges and universities a better understanding of how their applicants have had their lives and education disrupted due to the pandemic.

You will want to give the admission officers context to understand your experiences better. Here are three points to keep in mind:

1. Lay out your circumstances. Identify your experience during the pandemic.

The Common App provided some common circumstance examples:

- Illness or loss within your family or support network
- Employment or housing disruptions within your family
- Food insecurity
- Toll on mental and emotional health
- New obligations such as part-time work or care for siblings or family members
- Availability of computer or internet access required to continue your studies
- Access to a safe and quiet study space
- A new direction for your major or career interests

2. Explain how COVID-19 impacted you. It's important to remember that this essay is about you. Things may have happened to family members, friends or your community, but you need to show how it altered your life specifically.

3. Provide details. Give the admission officers a peek into your everyday life. Remember, they want to know about you. The more detail you can give, the better.

Remember, the admission officers have a good understanding of the situation students are going through. They are aware that the AP exams were administered remotely, SAT/ACT test dates were canceled, and numerous schools transitioned to a virtual learning model. There is no need to reiterate this in an essay unless there was a direct impact on an aspect of your application.

Your school counselor will also be submitting a statement about the impact of the coronavirus on your school. Their response will populate all the applications of students from the high school and cover any school or district policies that have impacted students. See the counselor essay prompt below.

The COVID-19 Essay for School Counselors

Counselors will also find space in their Common App counselor forms to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on their school communities. A counselor's response will cover any school or district policies that have impacted students throughout this time. Students may ask for a copy of this statement to have a better idea what information has already been shared with colleges.

Counselor Essay Prompt

Your school may have made adjustments due to community disruptions such as COVID-19 or natural disasters. If you have not already addressed those changes in your uploaded school profile or elsewhere, you can elaborate here. Colleges are especially interested in understanding changes to:

- Grading scales and policies
- Graduation requirements
- Instructional methods
- Schedules and course offerings
- Testing requirements
- Academic calendars
- Other extenuating circumstances

For more information about the COVID-19 Question on the 2020-2021 Common App visit:

<https://www.commonapp.org/blog/COVID-19-question-common-app>