
Additional Information: Writing About COVID and Natural Disasters

Understand the Prompt

COVID has affected students in all sorts of ways. If you need it, the COVID and natural disaster question in the Additional Information section is a place for you to describe your experience. Here's the prompt:

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. (250 words max)

This is not meant to be an extra essay. You also don't need to describe how your school responded to the pandemic. Your counselor will discuss things like school closures, online instruction, and grading policies. Instead, consider how these events affected you personally. The Common Application offers these possibilities:

- 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

Decide If This Applies to You

Everyone's life changed during the pandemic. If any of the things listed above apply to you, this is your chance to talk about them. If none of them apply to you, that's okay too. Admissions officers are not looking for drama or extraordinary stories. As one enrollment management dean told us, "I do want to know how COVID-19 affected you. But just share with me what I might experience in your household in a genuine, authentic way without that superhero cape."

How will you know whether to write something in this space? We suggest starting with these three questions.

1. What did you do?
2. What couldn't you do?
3. How do you feel about what's been going on around you?

Start by writing freely. Answer the questions without trying to make a big point or write an essay.

If, after free writing, you come up with something you want to share, use this space to write about it. If you experienced challenges, name those challenges in your response and explain how you responded to them. If you want to share something that you did or discovered with your spare time during lockdown, tell readers about it.

There is no right or wrong answer here. Just tell readers about what feels most relevant to *you* about *your* experience. And if you have nothing to say, leave the space blank. You won't be penalized for it.