

# **Essay/Personal Statement FAQs**

## **Helpful Resources**

- WTHS English Teachers [Presentation](#): Common Application Essay Writing
- [Top Ten Tips](#) for Writing a College Essay
- Northwestern University's Vlog Series: [How to Write an Effective Essay](#)
- Johns Hopkins University: [Essays That Worked](#)
- Common Application: [How to Approach the Essay](#)
- [Essay Writing Tips & Sample Essay Prompts](#)

## **Essay/Personal Statement Questions**

- **The personal statement is optional for my college application. Should I still submit it?**
  - Yes, particularly if you apply test-optional.
  - The personal statement is a place for students to explain something on their application or transcript that might need explaining. It can provide the admissions committee with some additional perspective and context. The personal statement helps tell your story, beyond just your transcript, GPA, test score/s and extracurriculars. There's more to you than just those things!
  - Be sure it's about YOU! Be original, don't write about what you *think* the colleges want to hear.
- **Do I have to answer the additional information section on the Common Application?**
  - The short answer is no, this is an optional section.
  - It's a place for students to have the opportunity to reflect on how circumstances may have impacted them. Examples might include:
    - 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

- Learn how to plan for this question, and if responding to the question is right for you, by visiting the Common App [article](#).
- **What are colleges looking for in my essay?**
  - The essay provides college admission committees with another way in which to evaluate your character, creativity, power of persuasion, depth of knowledge and style, mastery of standard written English and more.
- **Where can I go for help in writing my college essay?**

Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help! Below are some people who could help and provide you with some feedback.

  - Your English Teacher
  - English Teacher in the Study Table Almond Library on Tuesdays or Thursdays from 2:20-3:00
  - Mrs. McGahan, Almond Post-Secondary Counselor  
[cmcgahan@wths.net](mailto:cmcgahan@wths.net)
    - [Book an essay appointment](#)
  - Ms. Hartley, O'Plaine Post-Secondary Counselor  
[thartley@wths.net](mailto:thartley@wths.net)
  - Your [School Counselor](#)
  - A parent/guardian or trusted reader