

As your child approaches the college application process, you may be wondering about the major task looms over each student's head: **the Common App essay**. While all aspects of a college application are important, this element offers **the most significant opportunity for a student to convey personal insights that are not revealed elsewhere in their application**. For this reason, it is imperative that the content that a student chooses to share in their Common App essay is meaningful and revealing and that they convey it in their own authentic voice.

You may have heard that some areas of content should be avoided. While this is poor advice and there are no "wrong" or "off-limits" areas of content, it is critical to **consider the ultimate message** that a chosen topic will convey. This essay is an opportunity to demonstrate personal growth, showcase one's values, and/or explain lessons learned, and students can accomplish that via any topic, if they understand where to place their focus and how to support their story with appropriate details. In preparing to develop and perfect one's Common App essay, it's important to understand its purpose.

What is an admissions committee hoping to learn from reading this 650-word submission? The other parts of the application platform allow students to provide many facts, figures, and statistics about their candidacy to a college. Grades, activities, test scores (if submitted), type and size of high school, teacher and counselor recommendations, etc. provide a fairly comprehensive depiction of **WHAT** a student has undertaken and accomplished in their high school career. It does not give much insight into **WHY** they were driven to do so and **WHO** they are. This is the critical role the Common App essay plays in the application process.

The process of determining a story/topic/area of focus for this essay can certainly be daunting. At LGC, our essay coaches start by engaging students in a brainstorming conversation about their personal traits, characteristics, and values. We discuss people, circumstances, and events that have shaped a student's life. Through this opportunity for introspection, we help students locate a window into their pasts, personalities, defining moments, struggles, triumphs, and/or passions. This process of self-reflection is novel to most students, and it leads to rich self-realizations that spark ideas for amazing essay content.

After a multi-step process of evaluating topics and choosing the strongest one, the most effective process of developing an insightful Common App essay involves **free writing, drafting, re-examination, revision, and polish**. The best essays evolve from a process of writing too much, seeking an essay coach or trusted advisor to serve as a sounding board, incorporating “re-vision” and ensuring that one’s message comes through clearly.

Our coaches at LGC are experts in guiding students through this process of self-reflection, brainstorming, evaluation, drafting, revision, and editing. We ensure that a student can clearly articulate the theme and insights they wish to share and that they convey that message in their own unique, authentic voices so that they can successfully share WHO they are and HOW they will enrich their college community with admissions committee readers.