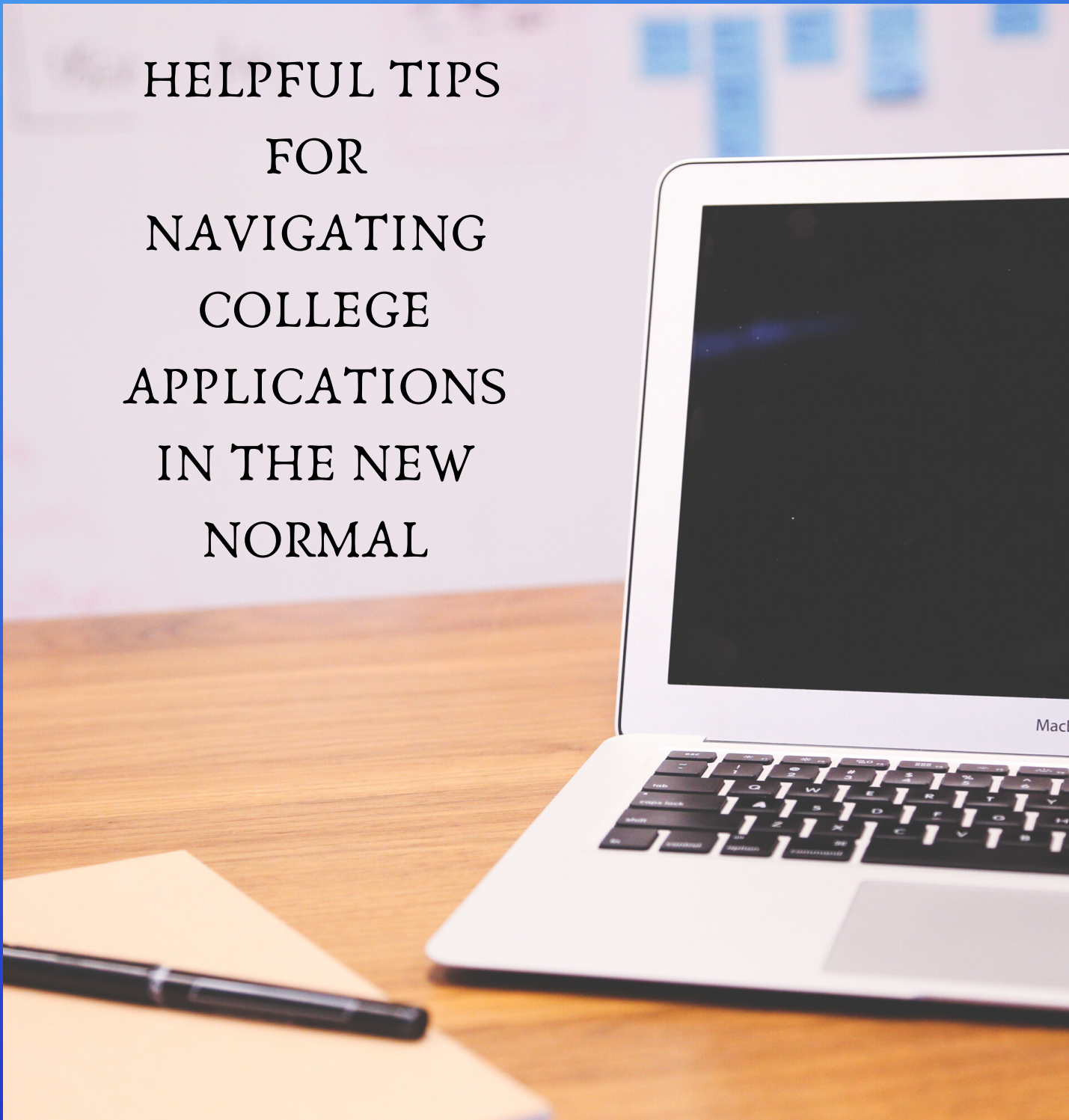


THE 2020-2021 COLLEGE APPLICATION GUIDE

THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE

HELPFUL TIPS
FOR
NAVIGATING
COLLEGE
APPLICATIONS
IN THE NEW
NORMAL



W E L C O M E

I'm Elisa Turner, a veteran homeschool educator, and college consultant. My life's work has been about helping students bridge the gap between high school and college so that they become confident college students. At SOAR, I not only help high school students prepare outstanding college application packages, I also teach them how find the best fit colleges and scholarship opportunities.

I prepared this college application guide for parents and students who are not only dealing with the overwhelm of college applications, but also the countless stresses of our new normal in 2020. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, there have been some changes made in the college application process. This guide will break those changes down for you and explain the application process as a whole.

SOARTOCOLLEGE.COM



ABOUT ME

I 'm Elisa Turner, educational consultant, college essay coach, and mom of two, who has helped her children to earn over 600k in scholarships. I have also helped students get into their top choice colleges for the past 15 years.

LETS' CONNECT!

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Apply to College With Confidence

www.SoarToCollege.com

The 2020-2021 College Application Guide

I've been helping students and families with their college applications for over 15 years. If you are feeling overwhelmed by the entire process right now, you are absolutely not alone! Most families feel very stressed during application season. On top of that, you and your child have the unique challenge of applying during a time of crisis when things have changed slightly.

That's why I've put this guide together: to help support you and your family during this time with simple, easy-to-follow advice that will help you feel confident about the admissions process.

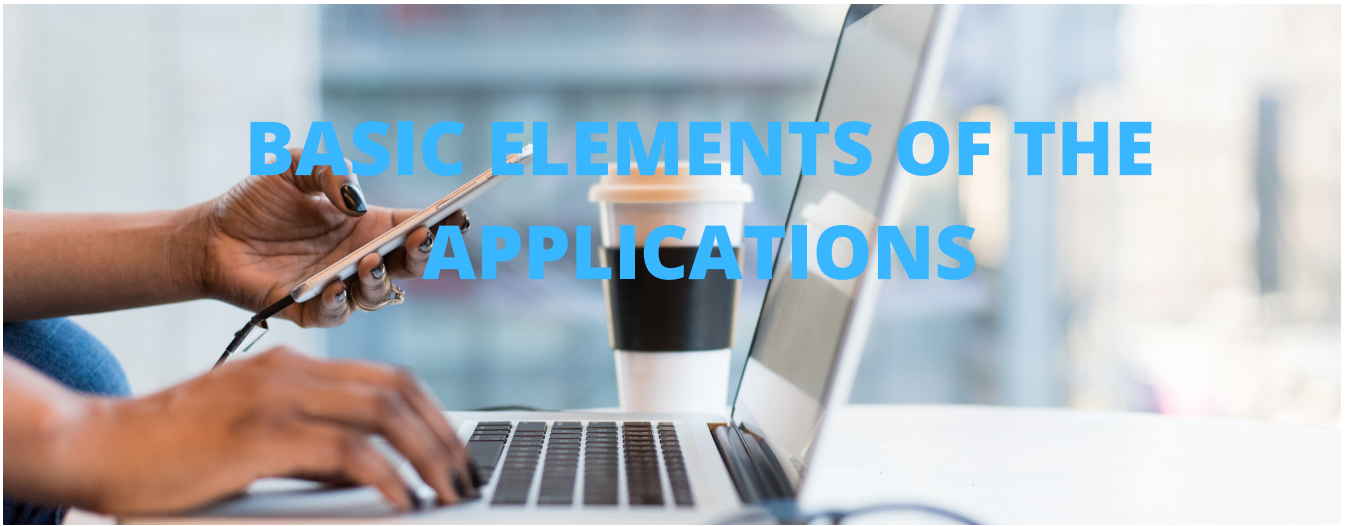


LET'S GET STARTED!


I'm so excited to be able to help you on this journey. As you go through this guide, my most important advice is this: keep it simple. Try to avoid putting too much pressure on yourself or your child and relax into this process. Know that you are all trying your best and that's what matters.


In this guide, I'm going to walk you through the basic elements of the application as well as the changes that have been made for 2020-2021. The guide also includes lengthy information on how to truly shine with the personal statement, the most significant and time-consuming aspect of the college application. I'll simplify the process to make it more understandable and less stressful for you.


Let's get started!





BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE APPLICATIONS


-  **THE PERSONAL STATEMENT**

The personal statement is the main essay on the Common Application. It is an essay between 250-650 words written on a topic of the student's choice.
-  **TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Common Application requires at least two recommendations from teachers and a guidance counselor recommendation.
-  **SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAYS**

In addition to the personal statement, most colleges have their own individual essay questions. Some schools have 3-4 additional essay questions.
-  **SAT/ACT SCORES**

Test scores from the SAT, ACT, and AP tests are recorded in this section.
-  **THE STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET**

Students fill out a list of the extracurricular activities they have done over the four years of high school. Activities can include sports, clubs, volunteering, work experience, etc.
-  **THE STUDENT TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript includes grades from all four years of high school.



CHANGES FOR 2020-2021



THE SAT/ACT

During the 2020-2121 application season, many colleges--including Harvard and Cornell--have stated that the SAT and ACT are not required for applicants. In this case, it means that these colleges are placing more emphasis on holistic elements like the essay, rather than qualitative elements like test scores. Some colleges, however, still require the test. It's best practice to keep a list college requirements.



THE ESSAY

The Common Application personal statement choices have not changed. However, the Common Application is adding a place where students can indicate how COVID-19 has impacted them. This is an excellent opportunity to share anything that may have impacted their academic performance during the crisis. Many colleges are including a supplemental essay question on COVID-19. It is a good idea to start brainstorming how COVID-19 has affected you personally.



VIRTUAL TOURS

Right now, it may not be possible to visit the colleges you are interested in. Instead, try a virtual tour. You can go to www.campusreel.org for videos and information created for students, by students. Be sure to go to each individual school's website. This is a good point to notice what the school is advertising. For example, are they emphasizing the academics, the quality of the campus, the student body?

RECOMMENDATION CHECKLIST

- Ask a teacher who knows you well.
- Be sure to ask your teacher in person; not through email.
- Remember to ask your teacher; avoid assuming that he or she will write it.
- Remember to ask a teacher who has taught you recently, in your junior year.
- Give your teacher enough time to write the recommendation. Ask her as soon as possible.
- Give your teacher all the materials (logins, envelopes, etc.) she needs to write the recommendation.
- Give her a copy of your resume. Ask her if she needs anything else from you.
- Ask her if she would like you to fill out a recommendation Information form
- Write your teacher a thank you note after she has submitted the recommendation.
- tip... Pic two teachers who know you best.



BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE APPLICATIONS



IMPROMPTU INTERVIEW

Use the list of personal statement prompts found here. Have a friend or family member ask you those questions as if you were being interviewed. Ask your interviewer to jot your responses down or—even better—record them on your phone



YOU PLAY THE INTERVIEWER

Ask your family and close friends these questions: What am I best at? What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think about me? If there was going to be a movie about my life, what would be the most important story to include? Make sure you jot these answers down or record them. Then, try answering the same questions yourself



POST-IT PARTY

Using those same questions, write down as many responses as you can on Post-it notes. Put those notes up on a wall or mirror. Arrange them according to topic. Do you have a lot that are related in some way? You may have your topic right there. If not, pick each grouping of Post-its and expand—is there a story that's related to that topic? Write that down too.



FREE-WRITING FUN

Brainstorm with the current Common Application topics. Treat this activity as a free-write, meaning that you write for at least 10-30 minutes without stopping. This is a proven technique to get the ideas in your subconscious out and onto the page. Don't censor yourself. Sometimes the best topics come out of the silliest beginnings!



Your Questions Answered

What is the college essay?

The college essay is a personal statement that usually falls between 250 to 650 words. It's the piece of the application package that allows your son or daughter to shine beyond standardized test scores, activities, and GPA.

Many students use the Common Application for the majority of their applications. If your son or daughter uses the Common Application, that form and essay will be applied to all colleges that accept it. The Common Application essay consists of 6 choices and one free choice. The student chooses one topic and writes an essay of no more than 650 words.

In addition, most colleges also ask that students produce a shorter supplemental essay for their college only. Therefore, most students will write one main college essay and several shorter supplemental essays.

Why is the college essay so important?

If done correctly, the college essay can be a game-changer for your child's admission to college. It allows the admissions officers to see her beyond the numbers. Aside from an interview, which is offered less and less these days, the college essay is the single component that offers your son or daughter a completely new element, a fresh start, a place where he or she can really, truly shine.

When should my child write the college essay?

As with any writing assignment, it's best to have time on your side. The more time your child has to complete the college essay, the better. The best time to write the college essay is the summer before senior year. That way, your child has the time to think about it and write it without the added stress of school work. Don't worry if the summer has already passed! Just make sure your child has at least a few weeks from start to finish.

How long does it take to write the college essay?

Obviously, this answer is different for everyone, but it should be a significant amount of time. I suggest that my students take at least a month for the entire process from brainstorming to editing. The real magic comes during the revision process, so I recommend writing at least four different drafts.



How can I help my child with the essay?

I've found that the best way parents can help their children is with the initial stage of the essay: finding a topic. This is probably the biggest sticking point for most students. They just don't know what to write about. You know your child better than anyone, so who better to help them find their best topic but you?

A good place to start is to read the prompt choices. If you haven't done so, sign up for an account on www.commonapp.org. Take a look at their selections and see if there is anything that showcases your son or daughter's unique identity. I like to say that the best topic showcases your child's MUSE—how she is marvelous, unique, special, and exceptional.



"Anything's possible if you've got enough nerve."

-J.K. Rowling

What makes a college essay great?

The best college essays stand out from the pile: they're memorable and unique. While they make a solid point like a traditional essay, they also tell a captivating story. So, the question is, how can your child tell a memorable, unique story that tugs at the reader's emotions? The short answer is: be yourself. If your child stays true to who she is, her voice, her opinions, her story, she will stand out. Remember, there is only one of her in the world.

The more complex answer is: make some noise! A good story is more than just emotional, it's exciting and interesting. Making noise means creating a conflict that leaves the reader eager to read more. It means that the writer adheres to the old creative writing mantra: show, don't tell. The writer needs to make the words come alive off of the page so that it doesn't read like an essay, it reads like an action-packed movie script.



Can students of all skill levels write a memorable essay?

The answer is yes, yes, yes! Over the past 15 years, I have worked with students of all skill levels and with the correct approach, all of them were able to unlock their unique creativity and produce something great. It may take a significant amount of journal prompting and organization, but if the student does enough thinking about the right questions, she can produce something truly great.



The 5-Step Process

Give your College Essay's a Boost!

Over the years, I helped students by teaching them how college essay writing works with a BOOST:

1. Brainstorm
2. Organize
3. Outline
4. Strategic Story tellings
5. Technique

Essentially, students need to spend a significant portion of their time during the **brainstorming**/prewriting stage, reflecting on questions that **Boost** their creativity. Once they have these standout elements, they can **organize** their ideas into a basic **outline**.

The **storytelling** process is where their essay leaps off of the page into an engaging, emotional, thought-provoking story. **Technique** is all about polishing the essay during the revision process. Students should write a minimum of four drafts for the essay, each draft focusing on one key component.

Do you want a simple, step-by-step system that will help your child's application succeed?

**CHECK OUT THE
COLLEGE APPLICATION AND
ESSAY BOOT CAMP**

Our Essay Camp is the secret--the shortcut--to writing a stand-out personal statement, which can significantly increase chances of college acceptance. It's a course that is realistic and doable, even for the busiest of students!

Lessons are detailed with tons of PDFs, worksheets, and actionable checklists to help your implement the lessons and write an outstanding college essay.

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Let's together!

HOW TO BOOK

I would love to work with you and your child! To book a session or a package, please schedule a phone consultation with me here

Book Your Free Strategy Call [Here](#)
We'll discuss the best plan for your child.
If we decide that I'd be a good fit, we'll schedule our sessions.



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