

## COLLEGE DECISIONS AND THE YEAR 2020: A VIRTUAL ROLLERCOASTER

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The year 2020 was supposed to hold promising things for myself and others, but only to bring tragedy and heartbreak. The passing of Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna Bryant, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many other unexpected incidents set the tone for what the year would bring. The closing of schools and businesses due to the coronavirus and the acts of police brutality contributed to the year 2020 being the worst year ever. No one expected 2020 to turn out like this, especially me, a junior in high school, working a job, and preparing for college and the SAT. The pandemic has put my life and the lives of everyone around the world on hold.

Before the closing of school, I already felt the pressure of signing up for the SAT and sorting out a list of colleges that were right for me. I felt as though I was falling behind, I didn't have a resumé, my GPA was not where I expected to be, and all my friends were participating in SAT prep classes. I was constantly drowning in nerves, working hard to bring up my GPA, and trying to find the motivation to study. Then schools closed a few weeks later, and I was unsure of what the outcome of the school year would be. The transition to online learning was difficult; I had to figure out a schedule that worked for me and remember to be up at a particular time for live classes. The three months of online learning were an adjustment, but the real stress laid within the topic of college. My teachers urged me to start thinking about universities, essays, and scholarships. I never realized that it took so much work to prepare for college applications. It's a stressful and demeaning experience, looking into different colleges that I think are perfect for me, then realizing my academics and scores don't meet their requirements. It's a reality check that I probably won't be going to New York, California, or Massachusetts. I was struggling to find an exciting topic to write about for the Common Application essay. As time went on, I was feeling less and less confident about myself and college. I had to realize that I was putting too much pressure on myself to find the ideal essay topic. The reality is that there is no such thing as a perfect topic. The key is how you present yourself and whether your words are authentic to your true self.

Being a student in 2020 has been a rollercoaster ride so far, from the times in March, hoping that schools will open back up, too late in June when I realized that I might be spending my senior year doing virtual learning. It has made me think about my future as a student and has raised some worries about college. While my academics are in a better place now than they were beforehand, and I'm feeling much better about my essays, the overwhelming weight of college applications is still bothering me. College is a journey, the pathway to a better life, and I know that I will make mistakes, and I won't get everything right the first time. I hope to have a great college experience, and I've realized that it is okay not to have everything figured out yet.

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