

APPLICATION ESSAYS

Showing Who You Are Beyond Your Resume

COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAYS

- Most colleges require some sort of essay or writing sample in their application
- Essays are a crucial part of your application and can either help or hinder your chances
- The process for writing a college essay is much different than a normal essay
 - They are generally more personal and specific to you
- The CommonApp has a list of essay topics to choose from and you have 250-650 words to respond to one prompt
- Other colleges may require different or additional essays

GENERAL COLLEGE
ESSAY APPROACH

OUTLINE OF HOW TO APPROACH AN ESSAY

- Know your prompt
 - Make sure you understand the prompt and what is being asked
 - Understand how it relates to you personally and how it can be used to showcase you as an applicant
- Brainstorm your ideas
 - You should reflect on your experiences and jot down all of your ideas
 - Narrow down the options and decide what story to tell
- Make an outline
 - Shape your thoughts so they have a introduction, body, and conclusion; also ensure that there is a natural flow and progression
- Write the essay
 - Stay on topic and be concise but keep it personal and interesting
- Proofread
 - Check for spelling and grammatical errors and ensure that the essay flows overall

FREQUENT COLLEGE ESSAY PROMPTS & HOW TO APPROACH THEM

→ Describe a person you admire.

- ◆ Avoid typical figures and pick someone that has genuinely had an impact or influence on you
- ◆ This should be someone that has caused you to change your world view or challenged you to grow as a person

→ Why do you want to attend this school?

- ◆ Do some research about the programs, professors, and opportunities to include and go beyond reputation and rankings
- ◆ Be able to articulate specific reasons that this school would be a good fit for you

→ What is a book you love?

- ◆ Choose a book that truly inspired or shaped you and discuss why you enjoyed it and what it meant to you

→ What is an extracurricular activity that is meaningful to you?

- ◆ Highlight what these experiences have taught you about yourself and how you have grown from them
- ◆ Tell a story and include how you found this activity, why you were drawn to it, and what it has shown you about yourself

THE
COMMONAPP
ESSAY

2020-2021 COMMON APP ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

2020-2021 COMMON APP ESSAY PROMPTS (CONT.)

4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

7. Share an essay on any concept of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

HOW TO APPROACH EACH COMMONAPP ESSAY PROMPT

→ Prompt #1

- ◆ This can include any aspect of you that can tie back to who you are as a person and what you believe in; it should not just rehash your resume or accomplishments
- ◆ You can discuss anything from your hobbies, elements of your personality, or a specific experience

→ Prompt #2

- ◆ Discussing your challenges can demonstrate your courage, perseverance, and determination
- ◆ You will want to show how you have grown and how your perspective has changed as a result of these obstacles

→ Prompt #3

- ◆ Choose a relevant and specific experience that changed your preconceived ideas about the world
- ◆ Ensure that it is specific to you and not a vague account of a more general issue

HOW TO APPROACH EACH COMMONAPP ESSAY PROMPT

→ Prompt #4

- ◆ This prompt can showcase your own thought process and the issues you consider to be important
- ◆ Make sure to explain why the issue is important to you

→ Prompt #5

- ◆ Colleges are looking for maturity and personal growth in prospective students
- ◆ Be sure to show what you learned and how you changed from the event that you choose to discuss

→ Prompt #6

- ◆ Write about something you truly care about and show that you are a thoughtful and aware of the world around you
- ◆ Ensure that you include how you will pursue this interest as well

→ Prompt #7

- ◆ If you choose your own essay topic, make sure that you demonstrate who you are outside of your resume
- ◆ Get to the heart of the story you want to tell and ask yourself how and why you want to write about this topic

TIPS FOR A
SUCCESSFUL ESSAY

FINAL TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR BEST APPLICATION ESSAY

- If you are comfortable sharing your essay, have a teacher (preferably an English teacher) read it and give you tips on how to improve your writing
- Make sure that your writing is on college level with appropriate vocabulary and sophisticated sentence structures
- Tell a good story that highlights your strengths, demonstrate how you have grown as an individual, and lets the college know what you will offer as a prospective student

LINKS TO RESOURCES

- [Steps to Write an Application Essay](#)
- [How to Answer Popular Essay Prompts](#)
- [7 Tips to Upgrade Your Essay](#)
- [College Essay Tips from University Admissions Administrators](#)
- [10 Tips for Writing the College Application Essay](#)

THINGS TO COVER IN YOUR MEETING

- Discuss the importance of having a good application essay
- Review how to go about writing an essay in general
- Explain how to address common essay topics
- Go over the 2020-2021 CommonApp essay prompts and how to approach them
- Talk tips about how to polish the essay and make it the best it can be