



The College Essay



Use the Google Classroom Assignments to help you complete your essay!

Introduction

The time has come! We're beginning **the College Essay**.

The terms "college essay", "Personal Statement," and "Common App essay" are typically interchangeable--folks are generally talking about the same [650 word \(max\) paper](#).

The purpose of this essay breaks down to two main points:

1. Can you write? / Can you express your ideas well?
2. What will **you** add to **our** college campus?

The college essay is significant in that it is the best **opportunity for you to showcase who you really are and what is important to you**. It's a chance to show another side of you that may be difficult to capture in your transcript and application info. Because this essay is important and it is usually what takes longest on college applications.

In addition to its weight of importance, perhaps the most difficult part about the college essay is keeping your composition **under** 650 words.

The Prompts:

Before you even *look* at the prompts on the next page, please first think of your **very own** essay topic. **What is the story that you want to tell about yourself?** What do colleges need to know about YOU that makes you unique?

2023-2024 Common Application 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?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
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 topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Essay Structure

The most popular structure nowadays looks something like this:

- First 2/3rds of the essay is a **narrative** (story). Use DETAILS and tell a STORY. Add dialogue, sensory language, description etc.
- Last 1/3 of the essay is time for **reflection** about the story you just told. Usually talking about growth, personal development, what you've learned and what you'll do with the lesson learned.

Example Essays - Past Students

- [St. Michael's College Accepted](#)
- [UVM Accepted](#)
- [Champlain College Accepted](#)

Example Essays - Collected from Online

- [Grandma's Kimchi](#)
- [Harvard Accepted](#)
- [The Dead Bird](#)