

Common Application Essay Prompts 2020-2021

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. 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 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.

Tips for Starting Your College Essay

Before you decide on an essay topic, think about what your readers already know about you. They already have a great deal of information about you from other parts of your application. Use your essay to elaborate on something important to you or to add additional information about what matters to you.

Step One: What do readers already know about you?

In the space below, make a list of some of the things readers can find out about you from the rest of your application (Test Scores, GPA, Band Member etc.)

Step Two: What else do you want readers to know about you?

What might they not realize from the rest of your application?

List some of your best characteristics below (I don't give up easily, I am creative, I listen well etc.)

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Step Three: Brainstorm Ideas

Coming up with possible ideas often takes time and some careful thought. Come up with some possibilities and see which idea really begins to take shape for you.

For Example:

Common Application Prompt # 1 – Meaningful talent
Story Idea: I am an intuitive person who knows how, when and what kind of hug to give.
What Happened? Family/friends have gone through both joyous and terrible times and I seem to know how to be supportive through the appropriate kind of hug. Some examples: Bad hair day, loss of a parent, acceptance to dream school
Why does it matter? This talent is central to my giving personality and my relationships. A hug is a multi-functional tool that can be used in many situations – it takes discernment. Often words are insufficient – grief or joy
What three points <u>about me</u> do I want to make to readers from this story? When words fail – my hugs do not. I can be present to people. I am an excellent hugger and am able to use my intuition in often very emotional situations.

Common Application Prompt #

Story Idea:

What Happened?

Why does it matter?

What three points about me do I want to make to readers from this story?

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