



Admission and Scholarship Essays

A brief overview on the importance of the admission essay, strategies for preparation and advice on idea implementation for crafting the best essay possible for your college search process.

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Outline



- Purpose of the Essay
- Sample Essay Questions
- Choosing a Topic
- Brainstorming and Rough Draft
- Grammar Tips
- General Suggestions
- Vonnegut
- Resources



Purpose of the Essay

- To find out more about you as a person than can be seen from the application and resume.
 - To see how you utilize critical thought and apply it to a variety of situations.
 - To get a glimpse of your writing “voice” and how you communicate ideas.
 - Allow you a voice in the decision process.
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4 Usual Types of Essay Prompts

- The “You” Question
- The “Passion” or “Interest” Question
- The “Why Us” Question
- The “Creative” Question





“YOU”

- ▶ Examples:

- ▶ “Describe an experience where you were unsuccessful in achieving your goal. What lessons did you learn from this experience?”
- ▶ “What makes you angry? What are you doing or what have you done about it?”
- ▶ “If you were given the ability to change one moment in your life, would you do so? Why or why not? If so, what moment would you change and why?”



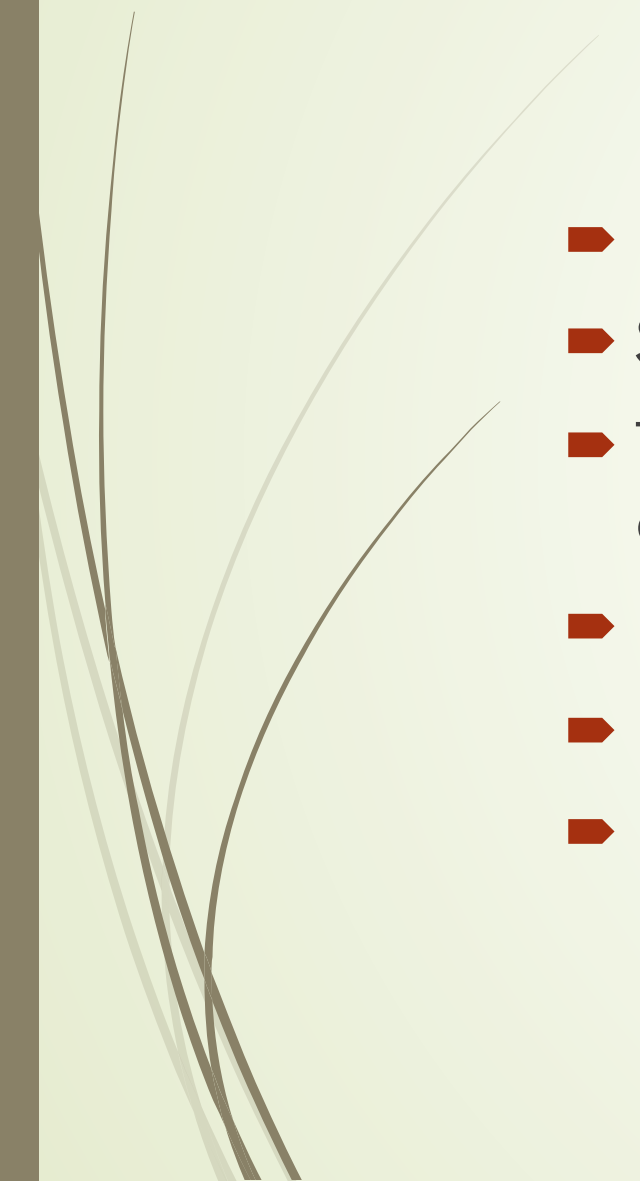
“Passion” or “Interest”

- ▶ Examples:

- ▶ “Describe a favorite book or movie where the main character has to decide something difficult. What did you think about their choice?”
- ▶ “What is your favorite fiction or non-fiction work (film, book, television show, album, poem, or play)? Why?”
- ▶ “Describe something you’re passionate about. How do you learn more about it? What makes it so appealing?”



Thoughts:

- Not an autobiography.
 - Select specific elements and focus there.
 - Tell us something new. Do not rehash your resume or application.
 - Do not recount. Reflect!
 - Do not drown in the freedom of the prompt.
 - Be genuine.
- 



“Why Us?”

- ▶ Examples:


- ▶ “Why _____?”

- ▶ “How did you first learn about _____ University, and what motivated you to apply?”

- ▶ “If you are applying to the _____ School of Engineering as either a first-year or transfer applicant, please discuss why you want to study engineering and why you would like to study at _____.”



Thoughts:

- Be sure to know your facts and do your research.
 - Be sincere and do not over-flatter.
 - Be unique.
 - Be honest.
 - Remember to be personal and precise
- 



“Creative”

- ▶ Examples:


- ▶ “What is square one, and can you actually go back to it?”

- ▶ “If you could be any animal in recorded history, what animal would you choose? Why?”

- ▶ “Devise a question that is not on this college admission form and provide a complete, thoughtful answer to it.”



Thoughts:

- ▶ Stay within your strengths
 - ▶ Inform the reader if you are focusing on a less known quantity
- 



Brainstorming Process



- ▶ Leave yourself plenty of time
 - ▶ College choice lists
 - ▶ Research essay prompts
 - ▶ Common App vs General
- ▶ Seek outside counsel
- ▶ Write out your potential paths
 - ▶ Use whatever method fits your personality
 - ▶ Outline
- ▶ Write, Read, Let it Sit...Repeat



Grammar Tips

Do

- ▶ Be consistent with grammar decisions throughout
 - ▶ Verb tenses
 - ▶ Oxford Comma
- ▶ Vary sentence structure
- ▶ Use a thesaurus*
- ▶ Avoid passive voice
- ▶ Be concise
- ▶ Read your essay out loud

Do Not

- ▶ Use clichés
- ▶ Use slang
- ▶ Overuse a thesaurus
- ▶ Use the passive voice
 - ▶ I will clean the house every Saturday. (active)
 - ▶ The house will be cleaned by me every Saturday. (passive)



Suggestions



Do

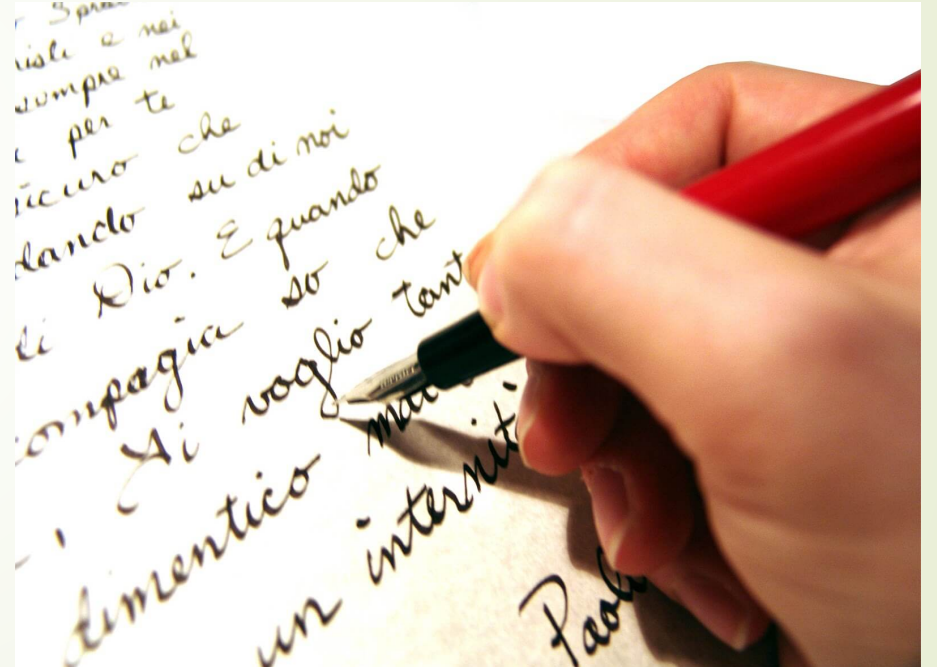
- ▶ Answer the question
- ▶ Show instead of telling
- ▶ Use simple sentence structures to make an impact
- ▶ Have multiple qualified people edit your essay
- ▶ Keep to the essay topic and length restrictions
- ▶ Focus on the goal

Do Not

- ▶ Try to write to your audience
- ▶ Post assertions as fact
- ▶ Overshare
- ▶ Use an essay for multiple universities and forget to change the name at the end when you state you have always wanted to attend _____ University.
- ▶ Lie
- ▶ Be negative or complain

Kurt Vonnegut's 7 Rules for Writing Well

- Find a subject you care about.
- Do not ramble, though.
- Keep it simple.
- Have the guts to cut.
- Sound like yourself.
- Say what you mean to say.
- Pity the readers.





Resources



- ▶ [Top Three Types of College Essay Questions, College Board](#)
- ▶ [Common App Essay Prompts](#)
- ▶ [Kurt Vonnegut's 7 Rules for Writing Well](#)
- ▶ [Tips from Admission Officers at Leading Schools](#)
- ▶ [Show, Don't Tell](#)
- ▶ [5 Things You Shouldn't Put in Your College Essay](#)



Questions?