

## **Tips for Writing an Effective Application Essay**

When you apply to college, you'll need to complete an essay as part of your application. This is your opportunity to show admission officers who you are and to provide information about yourself that didn't fit in other areas of your application.

**DON'T** focus on the great aspects of a particular college, the amount of dedication it takes to be a doctor or the number of extra-curricular activities you took part in during high school.

**DO** share your personal story and thoughts, take a creative approach and highlight areas that aren't covered in other parts of the application, like your high school records.

**DON'T** try to cover too many topics. This will make the essay sound like a resume.

**DO** focus on one aspect of yourself so the readers can learn more about who you are. Remember that the readers must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end.

**DON'T** simply state a fact to get an idea across, such as "I like to surround myself with people with a variety of backgrounds and interests."

**DO** include specific details, examples, and reasons to develop your ideas. For the example above, describe a situation when you were surrounded by various types of people. What were you doing? Whom did you talk with? What did you take away from the experience?

**DON'T** rely on phrases or ideas that people have used many times before. These could include statements like, "There is so much suffering in the world that I feel I have to help people." Avoid overly formal or business-like language, and don't use unnecessary words.

**DO** write in your own voice. For the above example, you could write about a real experience that you had, and how it made you feel you had to take action. And note that admission officers will be able to tell if your essay was edited by an adult.

**DON'T** turn your essay in without proofreading it, and don't rely only on your computer's spell check to catch mistakes.

**DO** ask a teacher or parent to proofread your essay to catch mistakes. You should also ask the person who proofreads your essay if the writing sounds like you.

**Top Two Tips – Be Yourself & Start Early!**

## 2024-2025 Common Application Essay Prompts

**\*If you use the Common Application, you will be asked to answer one of the following prompts listed below\***

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.