

College Personal Essay

Many colleges require you to write a personal essay, or personal statement, as a means of assessing not only your skills, but your personality and thought processes. How you respond to the essay prompts reveals much about your preparation, background and work ethic, and can often boost a student's chances of admission to more competitive colleges.

Below are several essay questions from this year's college applications, segregated by college. Choose ONE college or university, and respond to the respective questions in 500 words or less (two pages, typed, double spaced) unless the directions state something different. Remember, make these essays memorable. Tell a story about yourself, if you can, to answer the prompt.

Your rough draft is due by Monday; you'll need it for an editing exercise. The final draft is due Friday, October 11th.

University of Tennessee

Optional Personal Statement:

If you were having a personal interview with members of UT's admissions staff, what information would you want them to know about you? Of particular importance are your academic interests and achievements. In addition, information concerning your involvement in school and community, important personal experiences, how you might bring diversity to campus, awards and recognitions, special talents, obstacles overcome, and other aspects of your background and experiences will be considered in the individualized, holistic review of your application.

No limit. One or more pages.

Washington State University, Eastern Washington University,

Answer each of the following questions in 100 words or less:

1. Describe examples of your leadership experience and share how you have significantly influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time. Consider responsibilities you have taken for initiatives in or out of school.
2. Describe any of your special interests and how you have developed knowledge in these areas. Give examples of your creativity: the ability to see alternatives; take diverse perspectives; come up with many, varied, or original ideas; or willingness to try new things.
3. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to address this challenge. Include whether you turned to anyone in facing that challenge, the role that person played, and what you learned about yourself.
4. Explain what you have done to make your community a better place to live. Give examples of specific projects in which you have been involved over time.
5. Describe your experiences facing or witnessing discrimination. Tell us how you responded and what you learned from those experiences and how they prepared you to contribute to the WSU community.
6. Articulate the goals you have established for yourself and your efforts to accomplish them. Give at least one specific example that demonstrates your work ethic/diligence.

Western Washington University

Answer any of the following questions. Respond to each question with 300 to 500 words, and you may answer one or all of the questions.

1. What are you looking for in a university? Why is Western a good fit?
2. Describe any special circumstances or hurdles that have challenged you personally or academically, and steps you have taken to move beyond those challenges.
3. Reflect on a meaningful family or multicultural experience that has enriched your life.

University of Illinois

1. How have your past circumstances and experiences (such as your upbringing, community, and/or activities) impacted who you are, your future goals, and your choice of major? If you haven't decided on a college major yet, briefly explain your intentions and aspirations for your first year at Illinois. Limit your response to 300 words.
2. In no more than 300 words, tell us something about yourself that isn't covered elsewhere in this application, some interest or experience or yours that you think the University of Illinois should know about as part of the admissions review.

Pacific University Oregon

Required:

- Please write a detailed statement (at least 500 words) on how Pacific University fits your educational and career goals. This is your chance to share your thoughts with the Admissions Committee on how the university is a match for you, what your best assets are, and what contributions you would like to make in our campus community.

Optional

- Feel free to share with us additional information that will help us evaluate your application for admission

Life Pacific College:

1. Please attach a 1-2 page, type-written essay concerning your spiritual autobiography to this application. You must address each of the following:
 - a. Your salvation experience
 - b. Your Christian service experiences over the past five years
 - c. Your present stage of spiritual maturity, and
 - d. Your perceived direction in ministry

Hawai'i Pacific University

Write a statement providing any additional information you want the Admissions Committee to know about you.

University of Oregon

The UO is interested in learning more about you. Write an essay (500 words MAXIMUM) that shares information that we cannot find elsewhere on your application. Any topic you choose is welcome. Some ideas you might consider include your future ambitions and goals, a special talent or unusual interest that sets you apart from your peers, or a significant experience that influenced your life.

Vanguard University

Answer each question. Limit each response to 500 words.

1. Christian Experience Statement: Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior? Describe how you came to know Christ and explain how your relationship with Him, the church and ministry activities impact your daily life and morality, and how these experiences will strengthen the Vanguard community.
2. Supplemental Academic Success Statement: Describe any personal events or life circumstances that have impacted your academic performance in such a way that your record may not adequately reflect your potential for success, and what is your plan for academic success if admitted to Vanguard University?

The American Musical and Dramatic Academy

Answer all of the following questions, using as much space as necessary:

1. Describe a challenging experience in your life and what you learned from it.
2. What are your interests and career goals?
3. Choose two people whom you admire in the performing arts and explain why.

The Evergreen State College

"...it is recommended that your personal statement be between 300 and 500 words"

1. How have you prepared for Evergreen's interdisciplinary learning community?
2. Tell us about a group project and your role in the activity. What did you learn about collaborating with others?
3. What are your educational goals? Why do you believe that Evergreen is the best college for you to achieve those goals?

The Common Application

(An application used by many colleges and universities) Write an essay of at least 250 words. Choose any one of the topics below, or a topic of your choice.

1. Option #1: Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. Option #2: Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
3. Option #3: Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
4. Option #4: Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
5. Option #5: Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

University of Washington

500-650 words:

1. Discuss how your family's experience or cultural history enriched you or presented you with opportunities or challenges in pursuing your educational goals.
2. Tell us a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it.

George Fox University

A personal statement is required of all applicants. George Fox University is committed to being a Christ-centered community where education leads to personal growth. Taking this into consideration, please describe a time when your mind was changed and why you feel this experience was significant (500 word minimum).

Pacific Lutheran University

The essay allows the admission committee to get to know you as a person, as well as to evaluate your writing ability. The essay is a great way to understand you beyond your test scores and grades. Please choose from the following admission essay options and check the box of the option you have selected.

1. Option 1: PLU encourages students to consider the questions inspired by the poet Mary Oliver: "What will you do with your one wild and precious life?" What hopes and plans do you have for your future at PLU and how will you use your unique skills, passions and experiences to make a positive contribution to campus and your life after college?
2. Option 2: Please submit your college application essay on a topic of your choice.

Fresno Pacific University

ESSAY QUESTIONS

The essay questions give us an opportunity to get to know you as an individual, beyond the test scores and the grades. Essays will be read for content as well as grammar. Please answer each of the following questions on separate pages. Each typed response should be one page in length, double spaced and should include your name on each page.

1. Fresno Pacific University's motto is "Faithfulness, Wisdom, Service." How does this motto relate to your personal beliefs, experiences and ideals?
2. Choose one of the following:
 - a. Select an excerpt from a work of art (book, play, song, movie, painting, poem, etc.) that has a strong meaning to you; if possible include a copy of the excerpt. Share your interpretation of the work, and the impact that understanding has on your life.
 - b. Describe one or two of the most important relationships that have influenced your personal development.
3. Tell us about your personal and academic short- and long-term life goals. Why are you interested in pursuing these goals, and what role do you see your education at Fresno Pacific University playing in terms of achieving them?

Oklahoma State University

Essay Questions and Instructions

Respond to two of the following questions using no more than 300 words per essay.

1. If you could go back in time and alter one historic event, what would it be? Why would you change it, and how would it affect the world we know today?
2. Describe an invention you would create to solve an everyday problem you encounter. What is the problem, and how does your invention provide a solution?
3. If you were able to open a local charity of your choice, what type of organization would it be, and whom would it benefit? Describe your start-up process and explain why you chose this charity.
4. Jack Welch said, "Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others." Describe a time when you were a leader. How did you help others grow?

University of California

The essay prompts

Freshman applicant prompt

Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

Texas State University

Essay Topics for Summer and Fall 2014

1. Describe a setting in which you have collaborated or interacted with people whose experiences and/or beliefs differ from yours. Address your initial feelings, and how those feelings were or were not changed by this experience.
2. Describe a circumstance, obstacle, or conflict in your life, and the skills and resources you used to resolve it. Did it change you? If so, how?
3. Considering your lifetime goals, discuss how your current and future academic and extra-curricular activities might help you achieve your goals.

University of Chicago

2013-14 essay questions:

1. Essay Option 1. - Winston Churchill believed "a joke is a very serious thing." From Off-Off Campus's improvisations to the Shady Dealer humor magazine to the renowned Latke-Hamantash debate, we take humor very seriously here at The University of Chicago (and we have since 1959, when our alums helped found the renowned comedy theater The Second City). Tell us your favorite joke and try to explain the joke without ruining it. *Inspired by Chelsea Fine, Class of 2016*
2. Essay Option 2. - In a famous quote by José Ortega y Gasset, the Spanish philosopher proclaims, "Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia" (1914). José Quintans, master of the Biological Sciences Collegiate Division at the University of Chicago, sees it another way: "Yo soy yo y mi microbioma" (2012). - You are you and your..? - *Inspired by Maria Viteri, Class of 2016*
3. Essay Option 3. - "This is what history consists of. It's the sum total of all the things they aren't telling us." — Don DeLillo, *Libra*. - What is history, who are "they," and what aren't they telling us? - *Inspired by Amy Estersohn, Class of 2010*
4. Essay Option 4. - The mantis shrimp can perceive both polarized light and multispectral images; they have the most complex eyes in the animal kingdom. Human eyes have color receptors for three colors (red, green, and blue); the mantis shrimp has receptors for sixteen types of color, enabling them to see a spectrum far beyond the capacity of the human brain. - Seriously, how cool is the mantis shrimp: mantisshrimp.uchicago.edu - What might they be able to see that we cannot? What are we missing? - *Inspired by Tess Moran, Class of 2016*
5. Essay Option 5. - How are apples and oranges supposed to be compared? Possible answers involve, but are not limited to, statistics, chemistry, physics, linguistics, and philosophy. *Inspired by Florence Chan, Class of 2015*
6. Essay Option 6. - In the spirit of adventurous inquiry, pose a question of your own. If your prompt is original and thoughtful, then you should have little trouble writing a great essay. Draw on your best qualities as a writer, thinker, visionary, social critic, sage, citizen of the world, or future citizen of the University of Chicago; take a little risk, and have fun.

Universal College Application (Harvard, etc.)

personal statement

Please write an essay (500 words or fewer) that demonstrates your ability to develop and communicate your thoughts. Some ideas include: a person you admire; a life-changing experience; or your viewpoint on a particular current event. Please attach your response to the end of your application.

Colorado State University

Personal Statement (Essay)

The personal statement is considered in admission and scholarship decisions.

Your statement should be 400-500 words (minimum 250) -- concise, but more than one paragraph.

You may choose any topic(s) of your choice. The tips and suggested topics are intended to spark your interest, and they include areas of particular interest to the admission committee and to the Colorado State community.

Although the topics are slightly different, the Common Application essay satisfies the CSU personal statement requirement.

Most applicants submit their essays within the application for admission, though there is an option to submit the essay separately. Refer to the sidebar, "How to Submit Support Documents" for details.

University of Georgia

Short Essays

In the space provided or as a separate attachment labeled "UGA Short Essays," please address each of the following four topics in responses of 150-200 words each. Prior to writing your short essays, we strongly encourage you to read the UGA Faculty Statement on Diversity, which is available on our Web site at www.admissions.uga.edu. Please be sure to include your full name (as listed on your application) and date of birth on each page of the attachment, as well as the essay topic with each of your responses.

1. Incredibly, you have just won a \$100 million dollar lottery. To receive it, you must first earn a college degree. How does this change your college experience? How does it change your life after college?
2. Choose an intellectual or creative opportunity (for example, community involvement, a summer program, a unique project, travel abroad, etc.) from your high school years that you have enjoyed and highlight how you have grown personally because of the experience.
3. Tell us an interesting or amusing story about yourself that you have not already shared in your application.
4. UGA's First Year Odyssey Program offers more than 300 seminar courses for new freshmen. Some examples include "The History of Horseracing", "Einstein and the Theories of Relativity" and "The Zombie Plague". If you could create your own seminar course at UGA in any subject area that interested you, what would it be? What would the course be named and what would you hope to learn?