2019-20 Common Application Essay Prompts

Choose one of the Common App Prompts for your essay!

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.

Paper Requirements:

1. 12 point font, Times New Roman, Double-spaced!
2. 600 words **MINIMUM!**

Tips when writing your essay

1. **Don't be offensive.** Hey, we get that it's hip to be edgy. We're with it. But watch that you don't overstep the bounds of good taste in your essay when ruminating on faith, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or politics.

2. **Avoid controversial political topics.** You're in the Tea Party. The admissions officer is a communist. Step back, everyone, this could get ugly.

3. **Don't be negative.** It's not okay to talk about your dead dog in your college essay, unless Fido's death spurred you into caring about the plight of homeless animals so much that you felt compelled to start your city's first animal shelter.

4. **Beware the overshare.** There are some things that the admissions office does not need, or want, to know.

5. **Don't disparage the school you're applying to.** You're trying to get in, right? Just...just don't do it, okay?

6. **Don't be "too creative."** The admissions office at Vanderbilt is looking for a solid, real, interesting piece of prose, not a Shakespearean sonnet.

7. **Don't be arrogant.** Highlight your strengths in your essay, but not at the expense of others.

8. **Answer the essay prompt.** We've discussed this before, but it's another one of those things we can't say often enough, rather like "Brush your teeth twice a day" and "Milk belongs in the fridge, not on the counter."

9. **Don't write too little.** There's a word limit attached to your essay, which means that the admissions office thinks you'll have *at least* that much to say about their prompt.

10. **Remember what your English teacher taught you.** Check for spelling and grammar errors, write in paragraph form, and don't use profanity.