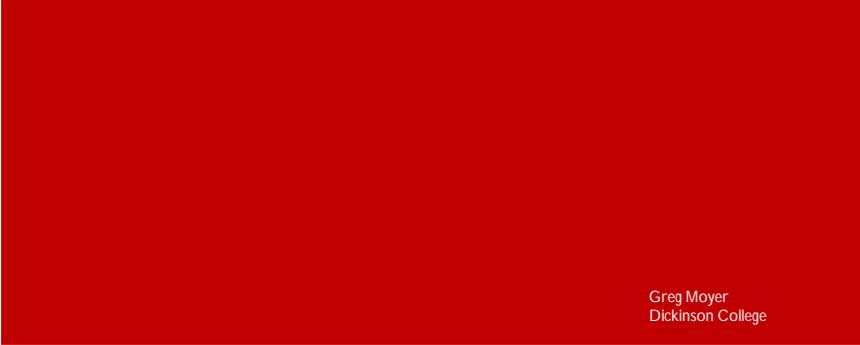


COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAY



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THE APPLICATION PROCESS



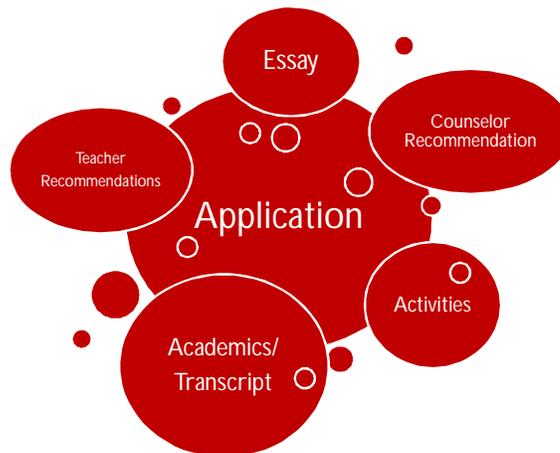
CONSTRUCTING THE APPLICATION

- TELL YOUR STORY—What are you passionate about? What do you value? How do you thrive?
- ORGANIZE your achievements thoughtfully
- Consider how each part contributes to the whole—selecting the right voices
- Address areas for growth head on
- Read the instructions
- Enlist a proofreader
- Use your resources
- Give yourself plenty of time—BE REFLECTIVE



"I want to show my colleges I'm well-rounded, so I wrote a poem in Spanish about how chess club has made me a better quarterback."

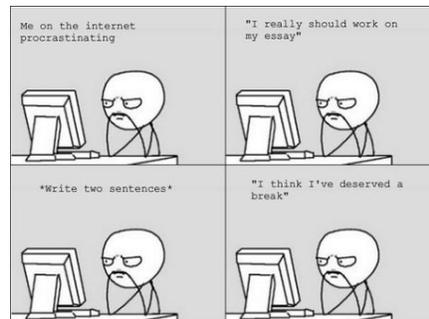
APPLICATION: PARTS OF THE WHOLE



THE ESSAY

ROLE OF THE ESSAY

- Tell **your** story
- Highlight a strength, emphasize or explain a relevant topic or point, say what has yet to have been said
- Demonstrate your creativity, style, and ability to write well
- For colleges, we want to know what you value, how you think and creatively solve problems, and how you might "fit" with our community.



ASSESSMENT OF THE ESSAY: THE FOUR C'S

- Content: substance
- Clarity
- Correctness
- Creativity: Memorability

ESSAY WRITING PROCESS

- Read the question carefully!! Be sure you understand what the question is asking you to do. Don't try to "force" an essay to fit a question.
- Reflect on the question.
- Brainstorm.
- Focus.
- Draft.
- Review—revise—rewrite
- Edit.
- Proofread.

CHOICE OF TOPIC

- Subject is you—who knows you better?!
- Avoid:
 - Topics on everyone's mind (the first one you think of is probably the one most other people think of first too)
 - World problems (tend to require research and end up sounding like research papers)
 - Life histories (say more and more about less and less: focus)
 - Romantic relationships
 - Essays about people who have influenced you: be sure that the influence is clear
- Skip the gimmicks

Types of Essay

Common
Application

Supplemental
Essay

Additional
Information

Personal
Statement

DEADLINES ARE IMPORTANT

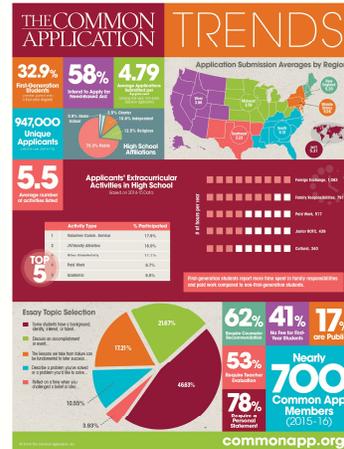


COMMON APPLICATION PROMPTS: 2018-2019

- 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.
- 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?
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- 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.
- Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- 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?
- 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.

MOST POPULAR ESSAY PROMPTS

"The most popular essay prompt of the 2017-2018 application year (through January 5, 2018) is "Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth..." (23.6%), followed by the topic of your choice option (22.5%), and "Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful..." (21.4%)."



SAMPLE ESSAY PROMPTS

- "Winston Churchill believed 'a joke is a very serious thing.' Tell us your favorite joke and try to explain the joke without ruining it." –University of Chicago
- Joan of Arkansas. Queen Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Babe Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Mash up a historical figure with a new time period, environment, location, or occupation, and tell us their story. –University of Chicago
- What's so odd about odd numbers? –University of Chicago
- "Anna Quindlen says that she 'majored in unafraid' at Barnard. Tell us about a time when you majored in unafraid." –Barnard College
- "What matters to you, and why?" –Stanford University
- "Imagine looking through a window. What are you seeing and why it is meaningful to you?" –Williams College
- "Take a blank sheet of paper. Do with this page what you wish. Your only limitations are the boundaries of this page. You don't have to submit anything, but we hope you will use your imagination." –Texas Christian University
- "What outrages you? What are you doing about it?" –Wake Forest University



SAMPLE ESSAYS




Writing

Personal Essay

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.

It's in every word. It's in every letter. It's in every stroke, curve, and sharp-dagged line that floats across the page. I express myself through the words I use, but true expression comes through the way I write those words. As such, I have a talent, or interest, that most would unfortunately call pointless: calligraphy. Ever since my friend classified my handwriting as a "font," I have begun to study the different lines, edges, and ideas that came with the touch of pencil on paper. I use these fonts to express myself. *Caesar Dressing*, a font full of edgy lines and tight-knit letters, has jagged edges and sharp points of snow-tipped European mountains that I see behind closed eyes. I feel the fast switchback turns in rolling Greek hills, the Via Appia stretching before me as I tumble down cobblestone roads, lines etching themselves into sweaty palms from holding the handlebars too tight. I conjure up something ancient in each stroke of the pencil and capture it in each cramped word. My love of languages appears in these lines and dances foreign steps in the swirl of growing graphite dust. But then there's the all-powerful *Times New Roman*. Academic in nature, these words line up neat and proud, plain and comfortable. It's the preferred of typing languages, and my personal favorite in my hand-written chemistry lab book. The T's become more perpendicular, my d's more structured, more refined. The words rearrange, and reorganize themselves in my brain- I classify them into genres, whose individual fonts create stories within the barest hint of black on a blank, white canvas.

Then, I have my own handwriting. Each word, each letter, is mine. It's personal. Formed by the hands that have allowed expression in every form of the word, the words speak to me. My mood changes, and a softly dipped j is injected with a stiff, pointy line. A happy thought, and an F ragged with fire smooths in structure, folds in those barbed spikes. My writing can be indulgent, curving and swooping through the air like brilliant balls of light burning in the far distance. My writing can be jerky and awkward, synonymous to my enthusiastic, albeit awful, dancing. Words can bubble up from me and pour out in gentle calm, pouring from my hands like they pour from my mouth as I dive under reefs and over arrays of rainbow colored fish. Words can spill out like butter onto an upturned page. They can meld like iron, a steel skin protecting the thin, flimsy paper, simply through the level of force in which my pencil bites down into the paper. In typing, I lose myself: the personality and communication that can be spoken in a gentle curve or a protective slant that some fonts can't express. I see the world full of words, textures, and flavors, that dash and zip in my head. But I can't share that well with others.

So I choose to be messy, to let my lines blur and jangle together in jerky staccato rhythm, or let them flow, elongating a space with tranquility. Now, words can define me, and I share that with others. These words hold me when I cry, dance with me when I sing, and rush with me in a fury when I scream onto a blank page. Their pizzazz, their flair, their connectivity, give them power. But the way words are formed, shaped, and cultivated, carries its own weight. For each word is only as strong as the thought behind it. And when that thought can be shared through any scrap of paper, there's no end to what writing can accomplish.

I am the champion of bacon. Or, at least, the School Board thinks I am. Personally, I believe that I am the champion of compromise.

Two years ago, in the spring of my sophomore year, I applied and was selected to become a student representative to the School Board of Directors. As a liaison between the students and the board, it is the representative's responsibility to bring school-wide student concerns before the board. In an attempt to cut down on the unhealthy offerings in the cafeteria, bacon had been eliminated from the menu. This change was met with shock and outrage by a large majority of the student body. Within the first few days of the school year, I was bombarded with requests for the issue to be brought before the School Board. And as the rookie, I was handed the now infamous "bacon issue" by my fellow student board representative.

Let's just say that I was slightly embarrassed to start my foray into public policy with a campaign to "bring back bacon".

When I brought the issue to the School Board, the members laughed. I explained that reintroducing bacon to the cafeteria wasn't just about giving people what they want; it was an opportunity to teach responsibility and healthy habits. The administration and the students were under the impression that bacon was an all or nothing kind of decision, that the school should either sell bacon all day, every day or not at all. I proposed that bacon could be offered only a few days a week. The more that I pressed the issue and reasoned with the board, the more passionate I became. I may have been fighting over bacon, but I was really advocating for students. Somehow the most frivolous and seemingly insignificant of issues had transformed into a crusade for student voice.

After almost six weeks of meetings and proposals, the first "Bacon Thursday" was launched. That morning, as students entered the building, the halls buzzed with excitement over the scent of cooking bacon in the air. I, too, was filled with excitement and pride. It was irrelevant that the result was as simple as a single item on the cafeteria menu. I had dedicated time and effort into an idea, and I could see the results. Not an A on a paper, or a ten out of ten on a quiz. This was a tangible result, and it wasn't for my own benefit.

Bacon is an unlikely vehicle of self-discovery. I managed to help the administration and the board to find a compromise that would satisfy both the students and the goal of creating a healthier menu. I have now spent nearly two years as a student representative. From this experience and those that followed, staff and students rely on me as a trustworthy resource to resolve important issues and concerns. Since my debut as the champion of bacon, I realized that I have the unique ability to find, within a polarizing issue, common ground.

ESSAY TIPS: DON'T

- Lose your authentic voice
 - Take inappropriate risks
 - Draw overly simple conclusions
 - Use another college's name
 - Make simple grammatical and spelling errors
- Essay should not repeat information contained elsewhere in the application (i.e., resumé in narrative form).
 - Student complains about circumstances rather than explains.
 - Student focuses on money (earning power) or college rank as the primary motivation for applying.
 - Essay is full of gimmicks, not substance; don't be cute or coy.
 - Claims in the essay are backed up by the rest of the application: i.e., interest in community service with few hours devoted to the pursuit.
 - Essay has the wrong school name.
 - Essay has mechanical errors, usage errors, or meaningless prose (deadwood) and clichés.
 - Essay does no do what is asked: too short, too long, does not answer the question. (could talk about length here)
 - Students should not try to write everything they know, experience; FOCUS.
 - Students should not write an essay designed for *True Confessions* or *The National Enquirer*.

ESSAY TIPS: DO

- Focus—write about a blade of grass, not a field of grass
- Respond to the prompt
- Read your essay aloud to someone
- Be your most genuine and mature self
- Ask yourself, “What do I want the reader to know about me after reading this essay?”
- Read a memoir or autobiography
- Write what you know; be yourself; no one knows you better than you!
- Be specific.
- Be confident, enthusiastic, and imaginative.
- Don’t simply talk about what you have done; explain why/how it has impacted you.
- Write, re-write, re-write: first draft is actually zero draft. After that one you can start counting with subsequent revisions.

Questions?