



THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ESSAY

Mandy Campbell

Galena High School Counselor, 2013 - present

High School English Teacher, 1990-2013

Scholarship Committee Chair, 2000-2013

Member 1998-99, 2013 - present

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ACTUAL ESSAY TOPICS FROM COLLEGES

- Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.
- What is your favorite word and why?
- How do you feel about Wednesdays?
- You have just completed your 300-page autobiography. Please submit page 217.
- **Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.**
- **Topic of choice.**
- **Personal Statement**



2014-15 COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY PROMPTS – 650 WORDS MAX

- 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.
- Recount an incident or time when you **experienced failure**. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
- Reflect on a time when **you challenged a belief or idea**. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?



2014-15 COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY PROMPTS – 650 WORDS MAX

- Describe a **place or environment where you are perfectly content**. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
- Discuss an **accomplishment or event**, formal or informal, **that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood** within your culture, community, or family.



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There is **NO FORMULA**
or “right answer” for
college admissions essays



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GUIDELINES

What is the purpose of the college admissions essay?

- Stand apart
- Distinguish yourself
- Give a sense of who you are
- Show how you think
- Reveal your personality, passions, interests

Think about who is reading your essay...

What do the readers want to find?

A mature, clever, creative, interesting,
intellectually-alive individual



THINK ABOUT:

WHO DO THEY WANT AT THEIR SCHOOL?

- A student who is excited about new learning experiences
- A student who is positive and hopeful
- A student who can write well and reveal his/her unique personality, character, and integrity through that writing
- A student who is “on the way,” meaning, he/she has learned, grown, and is still open to learning and growing.....he/she realizes life is a journey, we all have ups and downs, challenges and successes, etc.
- A writer who can entertain and captivate the reader (who has to read hundreds of essays!)
- An essay that is memorable, leaves a good feeling.



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You SHOULD consider:

- ❖ **Word limits**
- ❖ **STAY ON TOPIC**
- ❖ **Avoid LISTING everything**
Snapshots
- ❖ **YES Tell a STORY**
Selecting details can reveal creativity, depth of thought, character, analysis, maturity.
- ❖ **HUMOR** – use sparingly; can show cleverness when well-placed and appropriate
- ❖ **Be likeable, show generosity towards others**
- ❖ **“Tooting own horn”**
without arrogance or judgment of others
BALANCE pride with humility



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REVISING & EDITING MATTER

Pay attention to details

1. Brainstorm on topic(s)
2. Draft
3. Let it simmer
4. Read and Revise
5. Get lots of input, lots of readers
6. Revise
7. Have others edit it
(teacher, parent, acquaintance, online)
8. Perfect it

ReUse for other applications



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Let's read some examples

Consider: Purpose,
Audience,
&
Introductions

and do some brainstorming



FINAL THOUGHTS

DO

Think of the college admissions essay as a way to show **WHO YOU ARE** and **HOPE TO BE**

Put your best foot forward

Reveal aspects of your character your transcripts and resume can't show

Have fun with it!

DON'T

- Let the essay be an obstacle; think of it as more of a *challenge* to show you are college-ready
- Wait until the last minute; great essays take many drafts, lots of simmering, and must be edited



WEBSITES

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays>

<http://christianteens.about.com>

<http://collegeapps.about.com/od/essays>

<http://www.collegeanswers.com>

<http://www.huffintonpost.com/marjorie-hansen-shaevitz/college-essay-tips->

<http://www.usnews.com/education>

<http://apply.jhu.edu/apply/essays>

