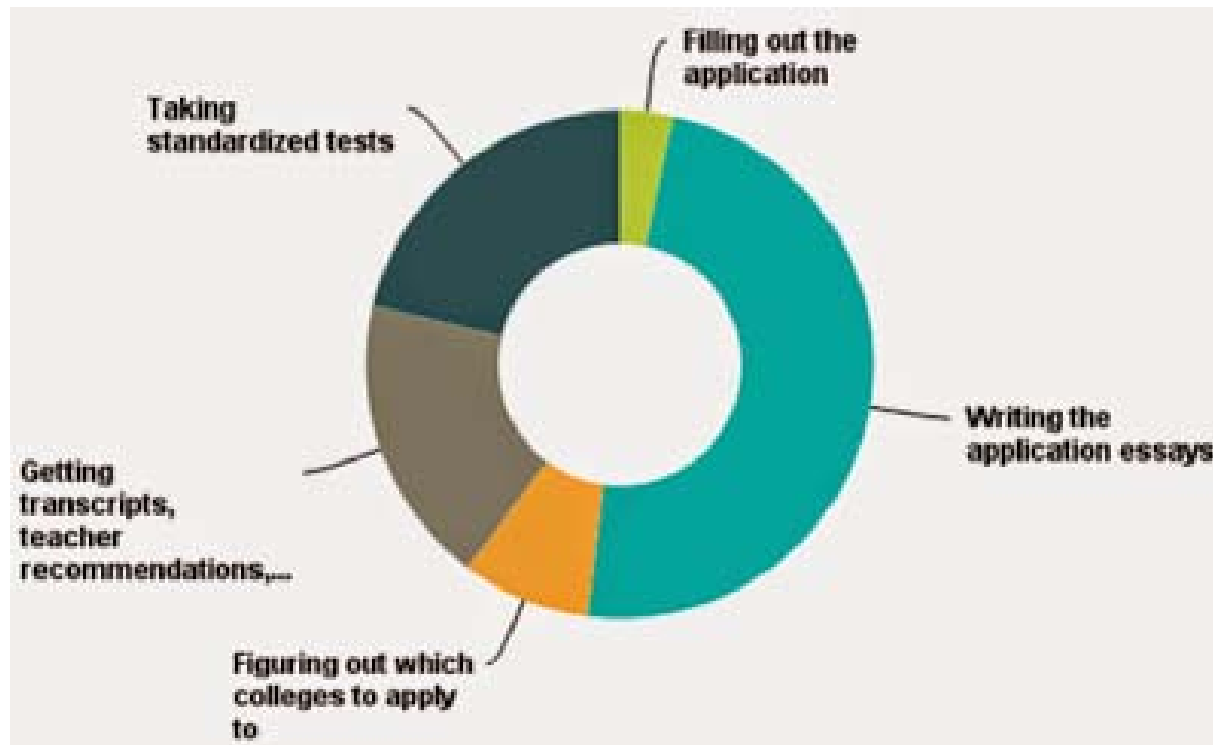


The College Application Essay

Rick Diaz
Regional Director of Admission
Southern Methodist University



In a recent survey...



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College Application Essay



Typical student writing the college application essay.

Wsyxlv@ixshw&nziwxj



College Application Essay



Typical admission counselor reading a college application essay.

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The Facts

- Over 1300 applications to read
- 40 applications per day
- 6 applications per hour
- 10 minutes per application
- About **3 minutes** to read the essay



The Truth...

Students spend 6 months pulling 650 words from the depths of their soul, polishing each word and phrase to create a grand literary opus.

We spend more time trying to figure out how to ~~change the time on the VCR than reading your essay.~~ use snapchat.

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Question...

Does the college application essay **really** make a difference?



Question...



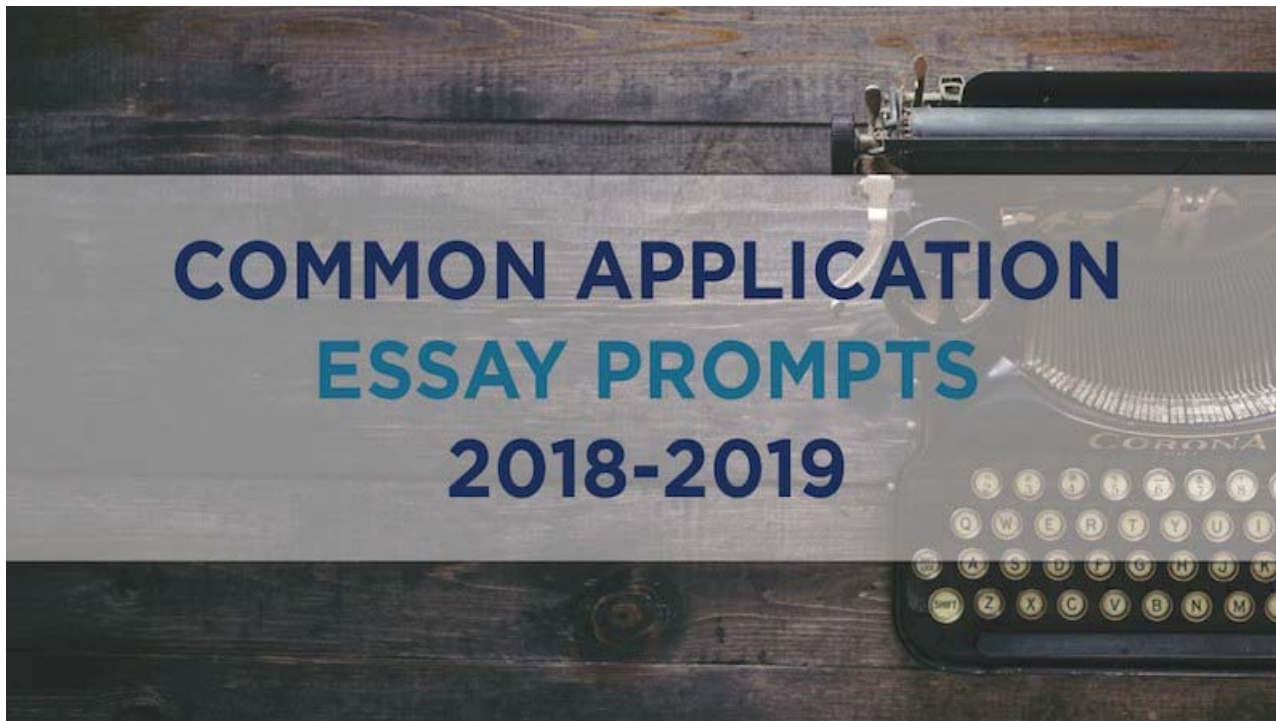


Choices...

- The Common Application
- The Coalition Application
- The University of California Application
- The Universal Application
- Individual University Applications



Common Application Essay



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The Prompts...

The Common Application announced that the 2018-2019 personal essay writing prompts will be the **same** as the seven 2017-2018 essay prompts.



The Prompts...

- Prompt #1 – Story
- Prompt #2 – Overcoming an obstacle
- Prompt #3 – Questioned a belief
- Prompt #4 – Problem you solved or want to solve
- Prompt #5 – Period of personal growth
- Prompt #6 – Lose all track of time
- Prompt #7 – Topic of your choice



Prompt #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.



Prompt #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?



Prompt #3

Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?



Prompt #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.



Prompt #5

Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.



Prompt #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?



Prompt #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.



The Numbers

jnwX

Period of personal growth...

wigsrh

Topic of your choice...

xlmh

Story – Background that is meaningful...

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Question...

Supplemental college application essays, do they really make a difference?



Why Us?

- Why do you want to go to our university?
- Why are you a “good match” for our university?
- How will you contribute to our university?
- How will you take advantage of all of the resources our university has to offer?
- How will our university support your academic or professional goals?



Why Us?

Typical answer...

“I really like your school because it has nationally recognized programs and looks fun!”

Two components...

- Deep knowledge of the university
- Convincing demonstration of genuine personal interest



Supplemental Essays – Tips

- Dig for ways to make it personal – include personal connections to brighten a generic answer.
- Get creative in your research. Go beyond the Web site to learn what they're all about. Think hard about what you really care about – feature that in your answer.
- Do research. Include experiences from your own background that support what the school values.



Supplemental Essays – Tips

- Look for examples of how what you want from your college experience lines up with what is offered.
- Read samples. Search Google for “sample supplemental essay” for your target school. Be sure not copy what others have said – get ideas for your own answers.
- If you mention something that intrigues you, make sure you know what you are talking about.



Supplemental Essays – Tips

- Know why you want to go there. Yes, it may seem obvious but you would be surprised that some students don't know why they are applying.
- Start with your best point or idea which should include details or specific examples, which are natural “hooks.”

In many ways, these essays are more important than the main college application essay. **WE** get to choose the questions.



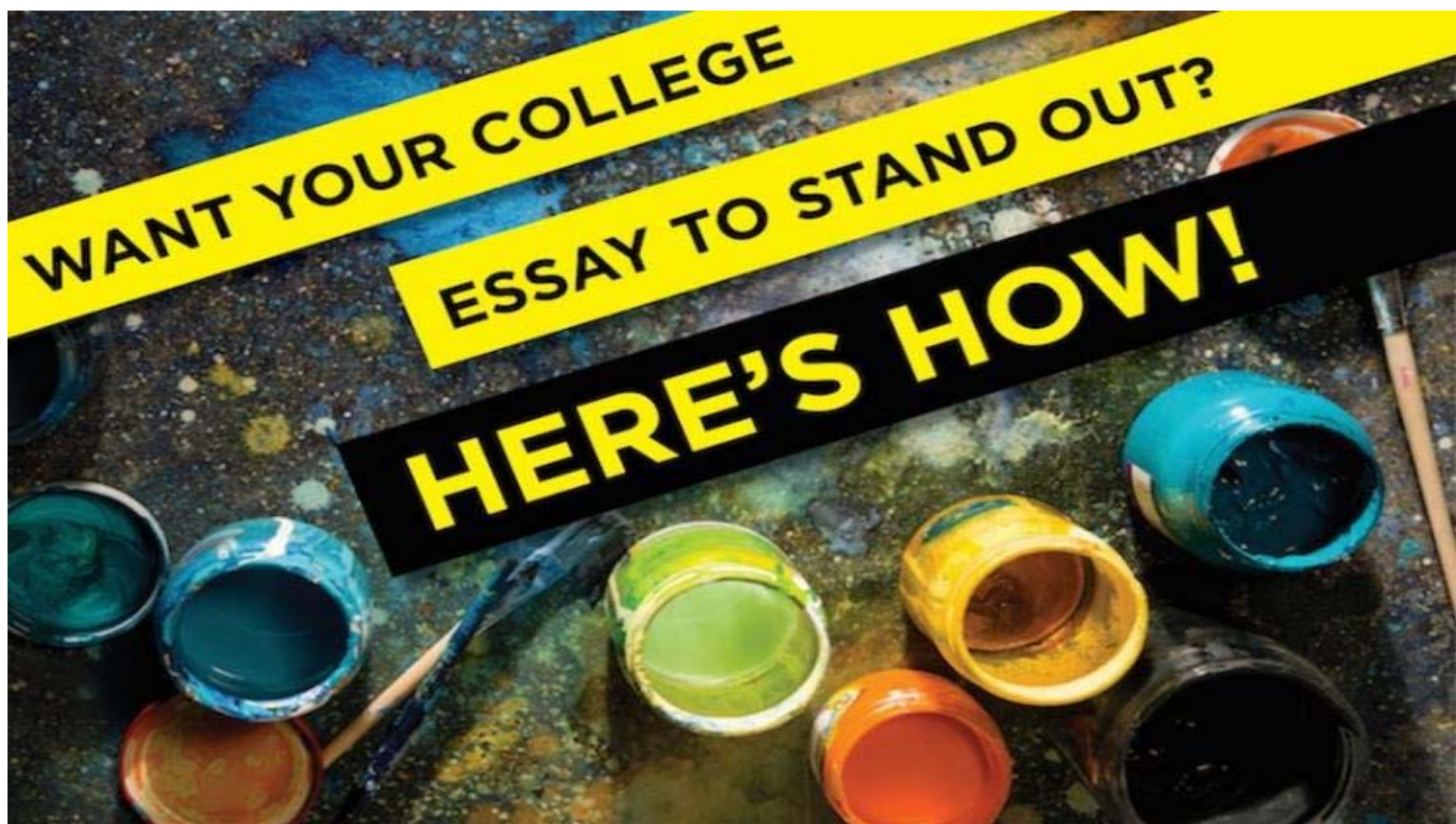
Supplemental Essays

- What do you hope to find over the rainbow?
- Tell us about a time when your curiosity led you someplace you weren't expecting to go.
- If you could travel anywhere in time or space, either real or imagined, where would you go and why?
- What does #YOLO mean to you?
- What's your favorite word and why?



Supplemental Essays

- Tell us about the most embarrassing moment of your life.
- You have 150 words... take a risk.
- If you could choose to be raised by robots, dinosaurs, or aliens, who would you pick? Why?
- What invention would the world be better off without, and why?
- Give us your Top Ten list.



WANT YOUR COLLEGE

ESSAY TO STAND OUT?

HERE'S HOW!



Topics to Avoid...

- Your Drug Use or Dating Strategies
- Your run-in with the law
- Your List of Accomplishments
- One-track Social, Religious, or Political lectures
- Woe is Me
- The Travel Journal
- Excuses



Beware of Clichés...

- Sports
- Travel
- Injuries and Illness
- Childhood Anecdotes
- Community Service
- Influential Parents
- Anything Risqué
- Preaching
- Kooky Topics
- Broad Conclusions



College Application Essays

- Reveal something we can't find on the transcript
- Make your point quickly
- Make yourself memorable
- Tell us something we don't know
 - “This is how I feel about...”
 - “This is what is important to me...”
 - “This is what I value...”



Common Mistakes...

- Not putting in enough time to brainstorm – START EARLY
- Trashing ideas before you fully explore them – keep everything so don't throw anything away
- Trying too hard to come up with ideas that are quirky instead of authentic
- Ignoring your instincts



Remember – It's an Essay

- Check for content not just spelling
- Style, flow, tone, and mechanics
- Opening sentence – Closing sentence
- Students who take a risk with the content and structure are generally more successful
- Content and structure **MUST** make a larger point about **YOU** the applicant



Spelling DOES matter...

- “I was so excited to finally be a candy stripper at the UCSD University Health Center.”
- “I recall with great fondness the many hours my brother and I spent hunting peasants.”
- “I have made the horror role every semester.”
- “I never personally experienced death until my grandfather died.”



That darn opening sentence

- “1800 miles from home – no car, no cable, no Chick-fil-A.”
- “Being Greek is a full time job!”
- “Unfortunately, many people know what it is like to be the fat kid in school – I certainly do.”
- “It’s true - I don’t speak fluent Chinese, I haven’t solved world hunger, and I can’t play the harp. But I’m a middle child and I think that’s pretty special.”



That darn opening sentence

- DO – Get to the point. Make me want to read your essay.
- DON'T – Re-state the essay prompt or tell the reader the purpose of your essay.



That pesky closing sentence

- Just as important as the opening sentence
- Don't begin the last sentence with “In conclusion” or “To summarize” or “Finally”
- Leave the reader wanting more



It's all about style

Standing at the ship's weathered wooden railing, the biting cold wind reaching into his very core, he gazed at the approaching island shrouded in foreboding grey clouds and realized that he, Napoleon Bonaparte, was beginning the final tragic chapter of his once glorious life.

Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled to the island of St. Helena in 1815 where he would eventually die.



It's all about style

“I am honored to apply for the Bachelor of Library Science program at Southern Methodist University because as long as I can remember I have had a love affair with books. Since I was eleven I have known I wanted to be a librarian.”

“When I was eleven, my great-aunt Gretchen passed away and left me something that changed my life: a library of about five thousand books. Some of my best days were spent arranging and reading her books. Since then, I have wanted to be a librarian.”



BIG Takeaway

Colleges want to know something genuine about the applicant that shows reflection and/or growth. We want to know what the student wants us to know beyond grades, test scores, and the rest of the application. What truly matters is the story **YOU** want to tell about yourself and of course how you tell it.

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~ *Mark Twain* ~

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**KEEP
CALM
AND
LET'S GO
DODGERS**



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CREDITS

Thank You!

GO NORMANS

