

Common College Essay Prompts

The college essay is your opportunity to show admissions officers who you are apart from your grades and test scores (and to distinguish yourself from the rest of a very talented applicant pool).

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. Describe a person you admire.
8. Why do you want to attend this school?
9. What is a book you love?
10. What is an extracurricular activity that has been meaningful to you?

Harvard Essay Questions

You may wish to include an additional essay if you feel that the college application forms do not provide sufficient opportunity to convey important information about yourself or your accomplishments. You may write on a topic of your choice, or you may choose from one of the following topics:

- Unusual circumstances in your life
- Travel or living experiences in other countries
- What you would want your future college roommate to know about you
- An intellectual experience (course, project, book, discussion, paper, poetry, or research topic in engineering, mathematics, science or other modes of inquiry) that has meant the most to you
- How you hope to use your college education
- A list of books you have read during the past twelve months
- The Harvard College Honor code declares that we "hold honesty as the foundation of our community." As you consider entering this community that is committed to honesty, please reflect on a time when you or someone you observed had to make a choice about whether to act with integrity and honesty.
- The mission of Harvard College is to educate our students to be citizens and citizen-leaders for society. What would you do to contribute to the lives of your classmates in advancing this mission?

Norte Dame Essay Questions

Notre Dame is an adventure that will develop more than just your intellect. Blessed Basil Moreau, founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, believed that to provide a true education "the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart." What excites you about attending Notre Dame?

Home is where your story begins. Tell us about your home and how it has influenced your story.

Think about when you first meet people. What is a common first impression they might have of you? Is it a perception you want to change or what else do you want them to know about you?

The late Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., Notre Dame's president from 1953 to 1987, served as a trusted adviser to U.S. presidents and popes. A champion for human rights, Fr. Hesburgh was one of the architects of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Reflect on the current state of civil rights, the progress that has been made, or the problems still being faced today.

This is your chance to take a risk.