

+ Essay Workshop, Part Two Agenda

- Feedback on the assignment
- CommonApp essays continued
- Supplemental essays
 - Why this college?
 - Extra curricular?
 - Other essays?

+ Feedback on the Assignment

- Save these stories even if you don't use them!
- Interesting stories! But do they let you make the point you want to make?
- Will the story make you memorable in the pool?
- “And that is why I you should be one of the small % of students admitted to your very competitive university.”
- Lot about strengths, few focus on passions.

+ *YOU* are the topic!

“Tell me something about yourself” ... your passions, strengths

What you
want to
communicate

Why they want you in their classrooms and on their campus, that they can't learn otherwise from application



What I want colleges to know about me

- Core qualities, essential values, fun facts, brilliant achievements, important lessons
 - ❑ I speak 4 languages
 - ❑ I moved 8 times before high school and twice since starting
 - ❑ I'm nationally ranked in tennis
 - ❑ I love solving hard problems**
 - ❑ I raised 5'000 CHF to support earthquake relief in Nepal
 - ❑ I am a compassionate person**
 - ❑ I'm industrious, funny, a leader, shy, outgoing, curious, a risk taker, a passionate reader...**
- Not just useful for the essay. Checklist for your whole application
- Create a file and keep it handy. Revise frequently.

+ Tell a story/stories about yourself



- That puts you in a positive light
- That feels meaningful
- The event(s) changed you in a positive way

Challenging to be truly original but you can always
be authentic!!!!



Decide which prompt is closest



*** More than one story/anecdote if using montage**

Make small adjustments to answer the prompt

+ CommonApp Prompts

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 failure can be **fundamental to later success**. Recount an **incident or time** when you experienced failure. How did it **affect you**, and what did you **learn** from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you **challenged a belief or idea**. What **prompted** you to act? Would you make the **same decision** again?
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 or event**, formal or informal, that marked your **transition** from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

No more than 650 words

+ *Find your 1st sentence*

- Two years ago, I joined the no-cut swim team. That winter, my coach unexpectedly assigned me to swim the 500 freestyle.

Or

- A blue seventh place athletic ribbon hangs from my mantel.

Grab the attention of your reader

+ *Craft an ending – don't rush!*

- Where the point of the story becomes clear
 - Final insight, not a rehash or summary
 - What does it mean to you?
 - Your analysis of why this is important is crucial
 - Do not introduce new ideas

- Do you show rather than tell?
 - Careful of clichés

+ Check your essay structure

- What is your essay *about*? Does it tell a story?
- Is it focusing on a short period of time?
- Does the story flow from the event that sets action in motion to conflict to resolution?
- Is the point of the story clear? How you resolve the conflict-ridden incident.
- What's extraneous to the story and can be removed?

+ Ask for feedback judiciously!!!



The essay must be your work!!

+ Have someone else proofread your essay



+ Supplemental essays

- List prompts for all essays for all colleges – and word limit - in one document.
- Word Count – figure it out before you start!
 - Test with text blocks of known size before you write
 - E.g., 301 words, 401 words, 501 words, etc.
- Identify overlaps in essays

- Make a copy of this file and use it to guide some of your research

+ Why this college?

- Johns Hopkins University was founded in 1876 on a spirit of exploration and discovery. As a result, students can pursue a multi-dimensional undergraduate experience both in and outside of the classroom. Given the opportunities at Hopkins, please discuss your current interests—academic or extracurricular pursuits, personal passions, summer experiences, etc.—and how you will build upon them here. (300-500 Word limit).
- Beyond rankings, location, and athletics, why are you interested in attending Georgia Tech? (150 word limit)
- The Admissions Committee [U Penn] would like to learn why you are a good fit for your undergraduate school choice (College of Arts and Sciences, School of Nursing, The Wharton School, or Penn Engineering). Please tell us about specific academic, service, and/or research opportunities at the University of Pennsylvania that resonate with your background, interests, and goals. (400-650 words)
- We imagine you have spent a great deal of time researching different colleges and universities. How did you identify GW as a strong fit with your interests, talents, and goals?

+ Supplemental essays – more important than ever

- For students to get a sense of what a specific college looks for in its candidates, the supplemental essay questions are a good place to start. Since Columbia values kids that read, they ask specifically what students have read both as a class assignment and on their own. Schools that ask how you will contribute when you attend want students who will engage and make a difference in the community. Schools that ask quirky questions, such as UChicago, Wake Forest or Tufts, want students with a distinctive voice and way of thinking.
- Columbia wants to see students who not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk. It wants to see students who truly have a deep intellectual curiosity and pursue knowledge across a wide range of sources. Students will have to illustrate their curiosity through independent research, summer study programs, the books they read, the events they attend etc. “If a student claims an interest in French, is he reading Le Monde? If a student says she loves politics, it is not enough to read The Onion and listen to The Daily Show or Rush Limbaugh.”

+ Why this college?

- What your reader wants to learn
 - ❑ You are a good fit
 - ❑ You've done your homework and really understand institution

- The more you know, the better you'll write
 - ❑ Specific professors, courses, departments, clubs, campus events, internships, research opportunities, etc., *that relate to your talents and interests*

- Which is better?
 - ❑ “First Choice University has a world-renowned faculty and fine students and facilities, and I feel confident I could reach my true potential there.”
 - ❑ “When I visited in November I met people in East Dorm who took me to a jazz concert and stayed up half the night arguing about the cafeteria workers demonstration on campus.”

+ Why this college? (continued)

■ Mention any visits, or extensive contacts

- Science major: “ While visiting your campus, I was able to tour the Marian E. Koshland Integrated Natural Sciences Center. I was impressed with the facility and the idea that I could be doing undergraduate research in the “superlab” as early as my junior year.”

■ Do your research!

- Classics major: “The courses on Cicero’s Letters, Roman satire, Latin historical documents, and Greek will offer me the advanced level of study I am seeking after AP Latin V.

Don’t even think about reusing these essays!!

+ Tell me about an extracurricular activity, job, etc.

- Does not have to be a remarkable accomplishment or personal talent
- Fine to reveal your joy in a favorite activity (running, cooking, gardening, etc.)
- Reveal another aspect of your personality
- Details
- Don't sound like a braggart or egotist

+ Creative essays

Examples

- Pick one woman in history or fiction to converse with for an hour and explain your choice. What would you talk about?
- How would you use new advances to improve your life and/or the lives of those around you? Describe your idea and its potential impact. Feel free to be as creative or as practical as you like.

Take the time to consider what you really think!

- Explain your choice/idea/etc. with examples/details from your experience

+ Anything else we should know?

- Truly optional?
- Don't repeat anything already covered.
- What have I not been able to communicate in my application? Keep it personal!
 - Special talent or area of interest
 - If you've had tremendous personal difficulties
 - Serious learning differences
 - Be a bit unconventional – what's the missing piece of the puzzle?

+ Summary

- Details, details, details
- Your analysis is critical
- Revise, revise, revise
- Start now
- The essays must be your work!!



+ Final words

- Open emails => demonstrated interest