



SCHOOL-SPECIFIC TIPS FOR YOUR COMMON APP SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAYS



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Introduction

The Common Application is utilized by over 900 colleges and universities, including all of the Ivy Leagues. The ease of use and availability of the Common Application has also ramped up competition among all desirable programs, because applicants can apply to lengthier lists of schools simultaneously.

No matter where you are applying, you need to know how to use the Common Application to its full potential. Since you are using the same application form as many thousands of others, it becomes crucial for you to portray yourself as a very uncommon and distinctively appealing individual, showing how you'll fit in and contribute to your dream school. Standing out for all the right reasons in your application requires you to be fully equipped with expert tips and advice when drafting the supplemental essays required by many of the participating Common App schools

That's where this guide comes in. Written by Accepted's college admissions experts, the pages that follow are filled with detailed advice on how to fill out the Common Application supplemental essays correctly, creatively, and compellingly. This powerful, effective advice is geared for applicants aiming for the top college programs. Applying it in your applications will boost your chances of acceptance to your first-choice school!

****Disclaimer: Information is subject to change. Please check with individual programs to verify the essay questions, instructions and deadlines.****

Why Our Clients Love Us

No matter where you live and no matter where you're applying, our expert admissions consultants are ready to listen, mentor, and guide you as you prepare an outstanding college application that will get you accepted. You'll love us because you'll see from the first phone call or email that we care about you and support you as you strive to achieve your goals and dreams.

But you don't need to take our word for it. See what some of our clients have to say about Accepted...

“Working with Alicia on my common application essay was an extremely great and beneficial experience. Her guidance was extremely helpful in thinking of the right idea for the essay and in expanding on the topic to best answer the question. She was extremely kind and provided me with many suggestions and ideas that really improved the quality of the essay. In just one hour, she transformed my essay into a strong piece of writing that I feel confident in, and which truly expresses who I am for colleges to see. She also showed me how helpful and important writing outlines for essays is, which is a skill that will greatly help me when I go to college. Overall, Alicia's kindness, leadership, and expertise made the experience extremely great, and this could not have been possible without her assistance!”

“We were lucky to get Marie to help us! Christmas came early for us this year and Stanford's acceptance is the best gift we ever received! :)”

[Read more feedback on why our clients love Accepted.](#)

Common Application Essay Prompts [2022-2023]

Many universities and colleges use the Common Application across the United States and in countries around the world. There are over 900 Common Application members in the United States, Canada, the European Union, United Kingdom, and worldwide. These institutions are united in their commitment to a holistic approach to the admissions process. This commitment means they want to evaluate you based on more than just numbers— test scores and GPA. They pledge to consider your essay responses as a significant factor in your overall application assessment. As more schools make submitting standardized test scores optional, the impact of your essays is even greater. Your required and supplemental essays are your chance to tell these schools more about you by providing additional context for your accomplishments.

The best way to ace your Common Application essay is to start early. If you begin brainstorming and taking notes now, then you'll have plenty of time to develop your ideas and create a remarkable essay that's well-thought-out, detailed, and interesting to read – a recipe for college admissions success!

Remember, your essays help round out the picture of who you are, what is important to you, and why. They also provide insight into the sort of student you might be in college. This year, the prompts are the same as the previous cycle. These essay options were created to provide countless opportunities for you to express your character, community, identity, and aspirations. Regardless of which essay prompt you address, it is essential to give yourself time to think about the information you are conveying and what it reveals about you. It is also important to invest the energy to revise your responses. Although it may feel time consuming, each rendition of your essay should work to clarify your intentions while projecting something meaningful about yourself. Your goal is to tell the admission committees something that is not already conveyed elsewhere in your application and express your individuality.

Common App essay prompts:

In addition to the main Common Application essay, many schools require additional supplemental essay responses. Tips for those essays are the subjects of other blog posts.

Source: [commonapp.org](https://www.commonapp.org)

Common App essay #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.

Describe your unique background, identity, interest, or talent and explain in detail what it reveals about what you value. Why is it so meaningful to you? This is an opportunity to talk about various topics that are unique to you—cultural heritage, burning interests, outstanding talents, sense of identity, or unusual circumstances. Then discuss how this information/revelation/reflection/experience/talent/interest plays out in who you are and the way you look at the world. In short, why is the information you selected meaningful to you and how is it central to the way you view yourself? How does the information you shared help to prepare you for your future? How does it influence your interactions with the world?

Common App essay #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?

In earlier years, this prompt asked about what you learned from failure that might be fundamental to later success. At the core of this question: How do you deal with adversity and what does that say about you? Clearly describe the specific challenge, setback, or failure you experienced. Discuss what you learned from the experience and how it affects you in your day-to-day life as well as its impact on your way of thinking. Don't focus on the setback itself; rather emphasize what you learned about yourself and how that event changed your perspective or behavior. Did it inspire or motivate you in some way? What lessons can you apply that might lead to success in the future? Maybe you learned that hard work pays off? Or that balance is important in your life? Or that you want to make different decisions in the future? If you can, discuss how you handled a similar subsequent obstacle using the lessons learned and with a different, far more positive outcome.

As you craft your essay and reflect on this experience, remember your goal in this response is to demonstrate resilience.

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Common App essay #3

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

This is a more open-ended version of the previous prompt. It allows you to address something that didn't sit right with your values but doesn't require you to have actively challenged the belief or idea. The focus of this prompt is on your way of thinking and processing the world around you. You can either talk about your actions and impact or explain your rationale for not taking action. Recount a time when you stood up for something or seriously thought about it. Explain what created the conflict that motivated you to consider action. What was your thought process? What factors came into play as you pondered the issue? What was the outcome and how did it impact yourself and others? Discuss why this is so meaningful to you. Remember to convey your passion for the issue. What do your actions and rationale reveal about you? Then think about whether or not you would make the same decision again and why. Make sure you clearly communicate your values and beliefs. What did you learn from this experience?

Common App essay #4

Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?

This prompt was introduced in the 2021-2022 application cycle and replaced the seldom addressed prompt about solving a problem. It has been an unprecedented couple of years that presented many challenges but there were also moments of clarity and goodness. This prompt is grounded in the concepts of gratitude and kindness. It is based on research that shows reflecting on the positive influence people have had on you increases your happiness and likelihood of success. Choosing to address this prompt provides an opportunity for you to recognize humanity. It encourages you to share joy and appreciation. Your response to this question will allow you to focus your discussion on something specific that someone did that benefited you and how their behavior inspired you. As you write your essay, consider the impact of that person's actions. It might have been a teacher, friend, family member, or even a

total stranger. Why were you surprised by this person's support/action/comment/gesture? Explain what made you happy or thankful. Why was this event significant to you? What were you motivated to do differently? How did it change your perspective about yourself or the world?

Common App essay #5

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

This prompt expands your options for discussing personal growth. It asks you to reflect on yourself, to identify how you were prior to a period of significant personal growth and then consider that impact on your perceptions of yourself and those around you (family, community, world). Think about how you might have gained independence, became more self-aware, or internalized a sense of personal responsibility. Provide a rich context as you detail your selected accomplishment, event, or realization and then focus on how it demonstrates a significant transition in your life. Why was this event so important to you? You can consider this in respect to your culture, community, and/or family. Take it a step further and discuss how this new understanding of yourself or others motivates you and how it might serve as a foundation in the future.

Common App essay #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?

This is your opportunity to discuss something that completely entralls you! The scope is endless, but the underlying question gets at what you find interesting, as well as why and how you go about growing intellectual competence. Are there people/mentors in your life to support you? What sparked your interest? How do you go about acquiring new knowledge? How do you gather and synthesize information? You need to make a case for why this topic, idea, or concept is so captivating to you. Your discussion should convey your enthusiasm, wonder and passion! Consider how you might explore or delve deeper into this topic/idea/concept in the future. How might your plans for the future support your efforts?

Common App essay #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.

Yes, this prompt is as open-ended as it seems. It really is an opportunity to write about anything you want! A word of caution to those who view this essay prompt as an easy way out of writing a new essay by selecting a previous work to use for this option— do not simply upload the last essay you earned an “A” on in your English or History class. No matter what topic you choose, allow some time for additional editing. This essay should be an excellent example of your writing abilities and should also demonstrate something significant to or about you. Think about what you want the admissions committee to know about you and your life experiences. Consider what the content of the essay might say about you as a person. What does it reveal about your way of thinking, values, character, and perspective on the world? How might it enhance the other portions of your application?

Regardless of the prompt you respond to, the word limit for the essay is 650 words.

If none of the essay prompts immediately jump out at you, give yourself some time to reflect on your life experiences. Talk with your parents and teachers about your ideas. Eventually you will discover a topic that excites you and reveals something significant about you. The subject of your essay doesn't have to be completely novel. However, it should reflect your unique perspective while clearly communicating your best self. Think about what is important to you and why. This is your opportunity to differentiate yourself from other applicants. Be thoughtful and remember this is your chance to make a compelling impression. Keep in mind; all the Common Application member schools are interested in learning more about you through your essays!

From initial strategy through final editing, our experienced advisors can help you create each element of your Common Application. Work one-on-one with your personal coach, submit an application you're proud of, and get ACCEPTED to the college or university that will help you achieve your dreams! [View our Common Application Packages](#) for more information.

Brown University [2022 – 2023]

Along with the basic Common Application essay, the Ivy League schools require supplemental essay responses. These additional essays help these elite schools gain a deeper understanding of you as an applicant. It's also your chance to explain how the school is a good match for you and how you can enhance their unique college community. What is important to you? How will an education from their school help advance your goals for the future?

When addressing each prompt, it is essential to consider the overall character and focus of Brown University in relation to your personal objectives. Visit the school website, read about their educational mission, and think about how the school supports your interests. Did you know that an impressive 100% of Brown faculty teach undergraduates? As the first Ivy League school to accept students from all religious affiliations, Brown is known for its openness.

It is also renowned for its innovative approach to education and outstanding research. Brown is committed to undergraduate autonomy and the process of free inquiry through their Open Curriculum program. For students, this means that while a framework of specific departmental concentration requirements guides you, you must take responsibility as an “architect of your courses of study.” Take a close look at the distinctive Brown Curriculum on the school's website and the variety of ways that undergrads have paved their own paths to areas of study concentration. Imagine what it might be like to have this level of control over the content of your studies. As their website states, “At Brown, undergraduates are creators, leaders and doers who are not satisfied with merely raising questions — they learn to confront, address and solve problems facing society, the nation and the world.”

Brown University supplemental essay prompts

Brown University supplemental essay #1

Brown's Open Curriculum allows students to explore broadly while also diving deeply into their academic pursuits. Tell us about any academic interests that excite you, and how you might use the Open Curriculum to pursue them while also embracing topics with which you are unfamiliar. *(200-250 words)*

This is your opportunity to convey how the college and its unique curriculum fit with your interests now and potentially in the future. When answering this prompt, write about how and

why the Brown Curriculum appeals to you, and how the Brown Open Curriculum complements your learning style. What attracts you to this approach, and what might you gain through the process? When you read the second sentence of the prompt, pay careful attention that they are asking two questions in one. Make sure to answer not only the first part as well as the second part.

Discuss the subject areas you are interested in studying and what specifically attracts you to explore these areas. You can include examples from previous coursework, volunteer experience, personal research, or any other factors that influence your interests. Check out the short student videos where they discuss the pathways that the Open Curriculum made possible for them.

How you respond to this question demonstrates your potential to succeed in Brown’s independent academic framework. This is a great opportunity to reflect on how you approach learning and discuss which subjects engage you. As you explain the subject fields and scholarly topics you are passionate about, you are providing a context for your interests and offering insight into how you navigate and process your world.

To address the second part of the question, reflect in your response openness to explore new topics via the Open Curriculum. That new area could be either a subject that you haven’t had the opportunity or time to dive into, or an area that previously didn’t engage your interest.

[Get a free consultation: Click here to schedule a call to find out how our admissions experts can help YOU get accepted to Brown University! >>](#)

Brown University supplemental essay #2

Brown’s culture fosters a community in which students challenge the ideas of others and have their ideas challenged in return, promoting a deeper and clearer understanding of the complex issues confronting society. This active engagement in dialogue is as present outside the classroom as it is in academic spaces. Tell us about a time you were challenged by a perspective that differed from your own. How did you respond?

(200-250 words)

How students interact both inside and outside the classroom is important at this school. In an era where college campuses are rife with politically divided points of view, and often, there are attempts to shut down or even “cancel” those with opposing views, this prompt offers you an

invaluable opportunity to relate how you have dealt with perspectives that challenged some of your own beliefs. Were you shocked and put off, but then decided to try to hear out the other side? Do you still struggle with hearing opposing points of view? If so, how do you plan to fulfill Brown's value of active engagement? Have you been shunned for a point of view of your own? How did you handle it? What have you learned about the art of listening, about the art of dialogue? [This question may itself feel very challenging to discuss](#)—all the more reason to devote thoughtful introspection about the need to engage with others with civility, respect, even about issues about which you feel passionate.

Brown University supplemental essay #3

Brown students care deeply about their work and the world around them. Students find contentment, satisfaction, and meaning in daily interactions and major discoveries. Whether big or small, mundane or spectacular, tell us about something that brings you joy. *(200-250 words)*

College is about a big idea: becoming an educated adult. But life is about more than just the “big” things; it's about thousands of small things that add depth, warmth, color, joy, meaning, and inspiration. What brings you joy could be listening to a favorite piece of music, or writing your own; reading a favorite book, or writing your own story; participating in a meaningful ritual; hiking in the mountains; volunteering to pack up meals and deliver them to the home-bound. Perhaps you found joy when you discovered something important about yourself. Whatever this experience or moment is, writing about it from the heart will help the school get to know you more deeply as a person.

Note: If you are interested in Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Geology, Mathematics or Physics, you must complete additional Science/Engineering statements. Likewise, if you are applying to the 8-year Program in Liberal Medical Education (PLME) or the 5-year Brown/RISD Dual Degree Program (BRDD), you must also complete additional special programs statements.

Final thoughts on applying to Brown

Brown has a highly competitive applicant pool. While it received 50,649 undergraduate applications for the class of 2026, only 5% were offered admission. Your essays make you more than the sum of your numbers.

Be sure to allow yourself appropriate time to reflect on your educational goals and to convey your most compelling self to the admissions committee through your essay responses. The best approach is to stay relaxed and focused. Keep in mind, while adhering to the designated word limits, your goal is to distinguish yourself from your peers by sharing personal examples, anecdotes, and perspectives. In short, provide sincere insight into what makes you unique and a good match for Brown!

If you're applying to Brown University, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from the highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

Columbia University [2020 - 2021]

Ivy League schools require supplemental essay responses in addition to the basic Common Application or Coalition Application essay. These elite schools try to gain a deeper understanding of the applicant through these supplemental responses. Think of them as your opportunity to explain how this particular school is a good match for you and vice versa. Your goal is to convey what is important to you and how the school fits into your future goals. It is also to help you demonstrate that you have done your homework as an applicant: that you've learned how your target school operates— which clubs are running, what courses are offered, what sports team you want to try out for. You want to make it clear to those reading your essay that you fit into the school community like a hand in a glove!

As you prepare to respond to the supplemental questions, consider the overall character and focus of the school in relationship to your personal objectives. Begin with a visit to the school website, read about their educational mission, and think about how the school supports your interests. Columbia takes pride in the synergy created between its diverse residential student population and its location in the heart of bustling New York City. It also embraces a rich educational tradition in its interdepartmental Core Curriculum that encourages creative critical thinking by encompassing writing, science, philosophy, literature, art, music, and history. Make sure to keep all of this in mind as you think about why Columbia might be the best educational experience for you.

The Columbia supplemental questions below ask you to reflect on your academic, extracurricular and intellectual interests:

Columbia College 2020 – 2021 supplemental application essay prompts

Applicants are asked to respond to Columbia-specific questions to tell the Admissions Committee more about their academic, extracurricular and intellectual interests. The Columbia Adcom reviews the responses to these questions in order to get a full sense of each unique individual beyond the other parts of the application.

For the four list questions that follow, we ask that you list each individual response using commas or semicolons; the items do not have to be numbered or in any specific order. No explanatory text or formatting is needed. Please respond to each of the three short answer questions in 200 words or fewer.

Columbia supplemental prompt #1

List the titles of the required readings from academic courses that you enjoyed most during secondary/high school. *(150 words maximum)*

This can be an opportunity to showcase a particular area of interest to you and reflect the content level at which you engaged in a given subject. Consider classes in which you discovered something new and exciting, which allowed you to explore an area of interest in more depth, or where you covered a topic that helped you see the world in a different way. Do not include books you hated, even if they are considered famous or classic; if *Of Mice and Men* did not speak to you, do not include it. Also, if possible, draw on multiple subjects, such as English, history, and academic elective courses.

Alternatively, instead of showcasing a particular interest, you might use this as an opportunity to show the breadth of your reading knowledge. You might, in fact, showcase both breadth *and* depth. We recommend that you 1) review ALL the books you read in your high school courses, 2) remove any you did not like reading, and 3) consider the remainder. Remember the tight word limit, so be selective in your titles, and be ready to speak to each book you list, were they to come up in an interview. Rule of thumb: if you can't speak about it, don't list it.

Columbia supplemental prompt #2

List the titles of the books, essays, poetry, short stories or plays you read outside of academic courses that you enjoyed most during secondary/high school. *(150 words maximum)*

Just like the first prompt, it's best to start with a long laundry list of texts and cut down based on which you remember, enjoyed, and can speak about. Here is a chance for you to show both breadth and depth in your reading: ideally, include texts from all the aforementioned genres (plays, books, etc); include classics and modern works; include varying levels of rigor or challenge.

Columbia supplemental prompt #3

List the titles of the print or digital publications, websites, journals, podcasts or other content with which you regularly engage. *(150 words maximum)*

The sources of information and media you engage with routinely provide insights into how you perceive the world. This list to some degree demonstrates what topics are important to you. It

also indicates the modes of information exchange you find most comfortable and denotes the media sources that influence your perspective.

Columbia supplemental prompt #4

List the movies, albums, shows, museums, lectures, events at your school or other entertainments that you enjoyed most during secondary/high school (in person or online). *(150 words maximum)*

This list allows you to tell the admissions committee the sorts of activities you do for fun! What do you find amusing or intriguing, relaxing or intellectually challenging? Your responses suggest the kinds of activities that may appeal to you at Columbia and provide insight about how you engage the world around you. See our recommendations above for addressing the first two prompts– they apply here, as well!

Columbia supplemental prompt #5

Columbia students take an active role in improving their community, whether in their residence hall, classes or throughout New York City. Their actions, small or large, work to positively impact the lives of others. Share one contribution that you have made to your family, school, friend group or another community that surrounds you. *(200 words or fewer)*

For this prompt, you are being asked to focus on *one* contribution. This means 1) avoid generic contributions (eg, “I’m a good friend”) and 2) dig deep into the contribution you choose to write about. Perhaps you volunteered as a camp counselor; were a pro bono writing tutor; supported your friend through a terrible loss. In each of these cases, your job is twofold: to be precise about the contribution you made (including *how* you contributed, *how much* you contributed- if quantifiable, and the *impact* of your contribution on those around you), and to extrapolate broader ideas and reflections about this experience. How did it change you? What kinds of contributions do you want to make at Columbia/in NYC, and how might you plan to do that?

Columbia supplemental prompt #6

Why are you interested in attending Columbia University? (200 words or fewer) *

This is a very important question for two reasons.

First, this question is implicitly asking you to demonstrate that you have done your research and *know* that Columbia is the best school to help you meet your goals. Before answering this question, you'll want to do some research and consider the following: Why is Columbia your ideal college community? Is the vibrant relationship between the university and the city significant to you? Which clubs, courses, and teams would you like to participate in, and why? What about Columbia appeals to you *that you cannot get at any other school*?

Second, this question is, on a deeper level, asking you to tell the admissions committee something about what you value on a personal level. Do you care about the performing arts and want a stellar theatre program? Is there a unique community service club you'd want to help lead? Is there a particular professor or course you are passionate about taking? Convey your enthusiasm! The adcom wants to know what kind of student you might be at Columbia.

Final thoughts on applying to Columbia

The admissions website clearly states Columbia's commitment to a holistic approach to the admission process: "every single application is given a thorough review, and there is positively no minimum grade point average, class rank, or SAT/ACT score one must obtain in order to secure admission to Columbia." That said, Columbia has a highly competitive applicant pool. The combined Columbia College and Columbia Engineering programs received 40,084 undergraduate applications for the fall of 2020. Only 2,544 or 6.3% were offered admission and over 95% of students admitted were in the top 18% of their high school class with average SAT scores between 1500 and 1560 (combined evidenced-based reading, writing, and math) and average ACT scores between 34 and 35. As you can see, your essays are the keys to making you more than a number.

Hard as it may be, it is essential to remain calm and focused. Be sure to allow yourself appropriate time to reflect on your educational goals and to convey your best self to the admissions committee through your essay responses. Keep in mind, while adhering to the designated word limits and deadlines, that your goal is to distinguish yourself from your peers by sharing your personal examples, anecdotes, and perspectives. Provide sincere insight into what makes you *you*, and show why you are such a good match for Columbia!

Additionally, we highly encourage college applicants to get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from the highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

Cornell University [2021 - 2022]

While Ivy League schools require the Common Application or Coalition Application essay, they also require supplemental essay responses. These help you to convey in greater detail how the specific school and program of study to which you are applying are a good fit for you and how you can contribute to the collegiate environment. This, in turn, helps elite schools glean a better understanding of you as a potential student. To respond well, think about your future goals and how attending Cornell will help you achieve them!

It is important to familiarize yourself with the specific character of the school before sitting down to write your essays. You can begin by visiting the school website. Whenever possible, a virtual campus visit is also helpful to get a feel for the school and gain a sense of how it supports your interests. Take a remote campus tour, call the admissions office to learn more, and speak with current students.

Cornell's curriculum focuses on the collaborative nature of a liberal arts education with fundamental knowledge. In addition, its practical approach to education is intentionally designed to impact societal and world problems. As you respond to each prompt, think about your personal objectives, the mission of the school, and why Cornell is the best place for you.

Cornell boasts 14 undergraduate colleges and schools with over 80 majors. Through the broad scope of majors and the individual course of study options, it prides itself on being "a place where any person can find instruction in any study." It fosters creative collaborations with a bottom-up approach. If you are unsure which major is right for you, the Courses of Study catalog provides degree requirements for each college.

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[Click here to schedule a call to find out how our admissions experts can help YOU get accepted to Cornell!](#)

The Cornell Writing Supplement varies between the undergraduate college(s) or school(s) to which you are applying. Each essay response should be a maximum of 650 words. These questions are fairly straightforward and the content is somewhat similar between

colleges/schools. Your goal is to do your research and convincingly explain why your selected school and desired course of study at Cornell is the best fit for you and vice versa.

Note: If you are utilizing the Primary/Alternate admission option, you must complete an essay for both colleges/schools that correspond to your primary and alternate selections.

Cornell University writing supplement essay prompts (by college/school)

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Why are you drawn to studying the major you have selected? Please discuss how your interests and related experiences have influenced your choice. Specifically, how will an education from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) and Cornell University help you achieve your academic goals?

College of Architecture, Art, and Planning

What is your “thing”? What energizes you or engages you so deeply that you lose track of time? Everyone has different passions, obsessions, quirks, and inspirations. What are yours?

College of Arts and Sciences

Students in Arts and Sciences embrace the opportunity to delve into multifaceted academic interests, embodying in 21st century terms Ezra Cornell’s “any person...any study” founding vision. Tell us about the areas of study you are excited to explore, and specifically why you wish to pursue them in our College.

College of Engineering

Applicants must write responses to two of the three essay options. They may choose which two prompts they write about—their choice. Each response is limited to a maximum of 200 words.

- Engineering is inherently collaborative. What does collaboration mean to you? What strengths do you bring to the collaborative process?

- For you, what makes Cornell Engineering special? Why do you want to attend Cornell Engineering?
- Diversity in all definitional forms is intrinsic to excellence in engineering. Indeed, devising the best engineered solutions to complex problems is often achieved by drawing from the diverse ingenuity of people from broadly different backgrounds, lived experiences, and identities. How do you see yourself contributing to the diversity and inclusion of the Cornell Engineering community? What is the unique voice you would bring to the Cornell Engineering community?

College of Human Ecology

How has your decision to apply to the College of Human Ecology been influenced by your related experiences? How will your choice of major impact your goals and plans for the future?

School of Industrial and Labor Relations

Using your personal, academic, or volunteer/work experiences, describe the topics or issues that you care about and why they are important to you. Your response should show us that your interests align with the ILR School.*

College of Business

What kind of a business student are you? Using your personal, academic, or volunteer/work experiences, describe the topics or issues that you care about and why they are important to you. Your response should convey how your interests align with the school(s) to which you are applying within the Cornell SC Johnson College of Business (*Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management and/or the Peter and Stephanie Nolan School of Hotel Administration*).

Your responses should discuss your past, present, and future, both in terms of your academics, your passions, and your interests and goals. Is there a narrative that helps illustrate your passion for cooking? A particular set of ideas or subject from school that you can't stop thinking about—that you simply have to pursue on the college level? What sparked your interest in a particular field? By tapping into the topics that excite you and the goals that feel like true ambitions of yours, you'll be sure to give the adcom a true sense of who YOU are. Demonstrating a strong

sense, not only of impressive credentials and passion, but also of self-knowledge and self-articulation, will be crucial to your admission.

But that's not all you're doing in these essays! You also need to demonstrate an intimate knowledge of Cornell and its offerings, of specific courses of interest, and of extracurricular opportunities and communities in which you would like to participate. When thinking about how Cornell appeals to you, consider academics, campus atmosphere, location in Ithaca, and your long-term objectives. This is your opportunity to convey your passion for Cornell!

Finally, you also need to reflect on how you will enrich the collegiate environment at the school. What skills and character traits do you bring with you? Are there particular communities or clubs (sports teams, debate club, Catholic student union) you have experience with already and would love to join on campus? Explain how your attending Cornell can play a part in helping Cornell achieve its goals as a university.

Final thoughts on applying to Cornell

Cornell has a highly competitive applicant pool. It received 67,380 undergraduate applications for the class of 2025. Only 5,852 were offered admission. The best way to distinguish yourself from the accomplished applicant group is through your essays.

Applying to an Ivy League school can seem like a daunting process. It is reassuring to remember that these supplemental essays are a chance for you to share your personal stories and real-life experiences. Pay attention to deadlines and word limits as you craft each response to represent your unique perspective. Start early to allow time for reflection and revision. Your goal is to demonstrate that Cornell is the right school for you and that you are the right student for Cornell.

If you're applying to Cornell University, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from the highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

****Disclaimer: Information is subject to change. Please check with individual programs to verify the essay questions, instructions and deadlines.****

Dartmouth College [2022 – 2023]

Dartmouth College utilizes the Common Application. It requires the main Common Application essay and additional supplemental Dartmouth-specific essay responses. The additional essays help the admission committee round out the overall picture of you as a prospective student by providing insight into your personality. Don't approach this as just another essay you have to write. Look at this as an opportunity for you to make a convincing statement about why Dartmouth is the ideal school for you to achieve your goals and how you can enrich the campus community.

Everyone must answer the first two essay prompts, but you have a choice to make about which question to address with your third response. As you decide which of the latter essay prompts to answer, allow yourself some time to think about Dartmouth's comprehensive character. Consider its location in Hanover, New Hampshire; if possible visit the campus and imagine yourself there as an undergraduate. Take a virtual campus tour. Research the different ways Dartmouth's curriculum and approaches to education are a good fit for you. Think about the specific activities, programs, or organizations that attract you to Dartmouth. In short, ask yourself why is Dartmouth the best place for me to achieve my goals?

Dartmouth reflects its commitment to assess your potential as a student on the Dartmouth campus in its request for a peer recommendation. Dartmouth encourages you to include a letter of recommendation from a friend, classmate, family member, or someone else you regard as your peer. Although the peer recommendation is a "suggestion," it is not an opportunity to overlook. This endorsement provides insight into how you are perceived by others. It also gives some indication about your potential fit with the Dartmouth community.

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Dartmouth prides itself on learning without boundaries. The overall academic structure and approach at the school is intended to allow you freedom. The year-round quarter system offers flexibility for you to design your own calendar. You can enter any major without a need for institutional approval (this includes Engineering). How might this sort of structure contribute to your educational success? Students are encouraged to: "Challenge yourself. Be yourself." Don't worry about choosing an uncommon topic. Instead, focus on discussing whichever topic you

select from your point of view. Your essay responses should express your individual story and reflect your personality.

The Dartmouth writing supplement

Dartmouth’s writing supplement requires applicants write brief responses to **three** supplemental essay prompts as follows. The first two are the same for all applicants but the third allows you to select from several prompts.

- 1.** Dartmouth celebrates the ways in which its profound sense of place informs its profound sense of purpose. As you seek admission to Dartmouth’s Class of 2027, what aspects of the College’s academic program, community, or campus environment attract your interest? In short, Why Dartmouth? Please respond in 100 words or fewer.

How is Dartmouth special to you? You have a limited number of words to work with, so be succinct. Remember, they already have your letters of recommendations (counselor, teachers and peer), grades, SAT/ACT/AP/IB scores, curriculum, and list of extracurricular involvement. This question asks you to focus on your personal and/or academic goals and how Dartmouth is a good match for you and vice versa. How will being a part of the close-knit Dartmouth community and engaging with the Dartmouth curriculum prepare you for your future? Consider the factors that make the Dartmouth program, community, and campus environment unique and how those factors will provide the foundation to support your aspirations. Communicate how these elements align with your sense of place and purpose.

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- 2.** “Be yourself,” Oscar Wilde advised. “Everyone else is taken.” Introduce yourself in 200-250 words.

What is your personal story? This is a perfect prompt to allow you to showcase specific conditions, situations, and/or circumstances in your background that are significant to your identity. Share something fundamental about yourself, your family, or your intimate community. You can discuss the intricacies of your cultural, familial, and/or social background—tell your story. Sometimes it might be something obvious, other times it might be disguised or hidden in some way. Do you feel pressure based on a set of arbitrary characteristics? Do you feel judged or liberated in some way? What is important to you? How does this relate to your values and sense of individuality? As you discuss your story, you must provide some context—remember to

address why it is significant for others to know this about you. Spend a good portion of your essay discussing how this story relates to your sense of identity. What does this reflect about you? How might what you shared influence your goals for the future? How do you reconcile finding a sense of belonging on your own terms? How might attending Dartmouth impact your story?

3. Choose one of the following prompts and respond in 250-300 words:

A. Labor leader and civil rights activist Dolores Huerta recommended a life of purpose. “We must use our lives to make the world a better place to live, not just to acquire things,” she said. “That is what we are put on the earth for.” In what ways do you hope to make—or are you making—an impact?

This prompt is about what motivates or excites you to action and how you make an impact when driven by passion to make something better for others. Demonstrate your enthusiasm for a cause that is meaningful to you. Discuss a specific incident and what was at stake. How did you make a positive impact? Or how did that motivate you to continue working toward that goal? If you acted on something, consider the repercussions of your actions. What was the outcome? What was the cost to you? What did you learn about yourself? How did this experience change you? This is really about why you think striving for change is important. Consider compassion, empathy, and understanding in terms of interpersonal and global impact. How might an education at Dartmouth prepare you for the future? What kinds of skills, ways of thinking, and experiences will help lay the foundation for success? How does a liberal arts education play into your plans?

B. What excites you?

This prompt has a broad scope but at the core is, what fascinates you? You don’t need to be an expert about the topic—how do you explore and engage your interests? This is an opportunity to discuss your passion for a particular area (academic or otherwise) and how you learn best. Provide an example of something that attracted your interest and then discuss the path you took to embrace your curiosity. What sparked your interest? What made the topic/activity/information/concept/question so meaningful to you? How did you explore the subject more deeply? What did you discover? What did you learn about yourself? Consider your learning style and how you approach new concepts. Also think about the connection you established to the subject—what might that reveal about your personality? How did this

process inspire you? Make sure to convey your passion for the subject and your enthusiasm for learning!

C. In *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, William Kamkwamba, Class of 2014, reflects on constructing a windmill from recycled materials to power the electrical appliances in his family's Malawian house: "If you want to make it, all you have to do is try." What drives you to create and what do you hope to make or have you already made?

This prompt discusses how creativity and innovation are often borne of necessity. How did/do you apply your creativity to problem-solving? The focus is on your motivation for creativity while providing a space for you to discuss your passion, imagination, motivation, and aspirations. In this modern technological world, how do you think outside of the proverbial box? Capture a specific moment or urge that sparked your vision. This may be an opportunity to incorporate discussion about an extracurricular interest/activity that demonstrates your creativity. Think about the ideas or values that inspire you to make some sort of impact and the ways in which you express your imagination. What have you learned about yourself through your exploration? Then discuss how that influences your sense of identity and perspective about the world. What does what you learned in this creative process reveal about the person you are? How might this affect how you embrace the future? How might you apply this energy going forward? How might you express your creativity and embrace your aspirations at Dartmouth?

D. Dr. Seuss, aka Theodor Geisel of Dartmouth's Class of 1925, wrote, "Think and wonder. Wonder and think." What do you wonder and think about?

This is another board prompt that deals with how you expand or enhance ideas, thoughts, and perspectives about the world to reflect on new possibilities. Examine the on-going cycle of coming up with ideas and how you explore those ideas. At the heart of this prompt is how you process the world around you. Consider how this new knowledge or way of thinking impacted or changed you. The focus of this prompt allows you to discuss the relationship between imagination and intellectual thought. Also consider what you might learn about yourself in the process of trying to understand new ideas. Remember to discuss how these new ideas influenced you—the way you interact with others, [how you think about your identity](#), what you might do differently with this new understanding. Dartmouth prides itself on providing flexibility in learning and an education without boundaries—here's your chance to tell them why that's so important to you!

E. “Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced,” wrote James Baldwin. How does this quote apply to your life experiences?

This question asks you to identify a specific problem or issue and explain how you actively engaged with it. How did recognizing the problem/issue help you to deal with it? You can address any problem, large or small. Think about the global community, humanitarian efforts, or any issue you would like to fix but make it personal by sharing the impact on your life experiences. Keep in mind that sometimes situations are beyond your control. You can tie this response to community service activities, thoughts about empathy, discussions about agency, and individual responsibility. Consider how you view yourself in relationship to those around you. Why are you inspired to confront this problem? Why is it significant? This response reveals your approach to problem solving, ability to conceive solutions, and illustrates how you process the world around you. This is an opportunity to demonstrate your values, critical thinking skills and creativity. Consider if and how an education at Dartmouth might help you to bring about positive change and address this dilemma.

Note: If you have unusual curricular patterns, your counselor can mention this in the Secondary Education Report, or you can discuss your circumstances in the “Additional Information” section of the Common Application.

Final thoughts on applying to Dartmouth

The context of your academic success is a significant factor in determining your overall competitiveness as an applicant. The top applicants take the most rigorous curriculum available at their high schools. Furthermore, by achieving high grades, they demonstrate their ability to thrive in Dartmouth’s challenging academic environment. Dartmouth embraces a holistic approach to the admission process and is committed to reviewing all aspects of your application. This is even more significant given that this application cycle is again test optional. Although Dartmouth is not reporting testing profiles from the last few application cycles, keep in mind; for the class of 2023, over 95% of accepted students were ranked in the top 10% of their high school graduating class with an average SAT score of 1500, and an average ACT score of 33. For the Class of 2026, it received 28,336 undergraduate applications and had a record low acceptance rate of 6.2%. Your personal narrative essays are your opportunity to pull away from this extremely competitive applicant pool.

Although it is easy to get overwhelmed, remember to stay focused on your goals. Allow yourself enough time to reflect on your experiences in a unique way that expresses your personality.

Meet all deadlines and word limits. Your overall application should clearly reflect your interests and motivations while enthusiastically demonstrating why Dartmouth is the best school to help you achieve your objectives!

If you're applying to Dartmouth College, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from the highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

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Harvard University [2022 – 2023]

It comes as no surprise that Harvard consistently ranks among the top universities in the world. Its highly regarded reputation and academic chops attract the best and brightest. The alluring Harvard brand coupled with its extraordinary education cannot be ignored.

It is important to keep in mind throughout the application process that your focus should be on finding the school that will allow you to explore and grow to your full potential while delivering what is most important to you. Identifying the best fit requires you to be thorough in your research and to consider a myriad of factors as you assess the best path to achieve your goals.

Harvard accepts the Common Application, the Universal College Application, and the Coalition Application (with no preference). All of these applications require an essay response.

Although Harvard does not *require* supplemental essays, you have the option of including an additional essay if you feel your application does not adequately represent you or your accomplishments. If you decide to include an additional essay, make sure to use it to tell the admissions committee something significant about yourself that is not addressed sufficiently in another portion of your application materials. The admissions committee wants a holistic picture of you as a potential student. They want to be able to identify your voice and personality in your writing. This is an opportunity to convey meaningful aspects of your character, discuss unique interests, demonstrate how you inspire those around you, and address how Harvard will help you to thrive. How will you take advantage of the opportunities offered at Harvard? How will you contribute to the Harvard educational experience?

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If Harvard is your first choice, you have the option to apply through one of its early decision programs (November 1st deadline). For details about these two programs and the exact rules governing both, please [see the Harvard website](#).

As you consider a supplemental essay, remember that your content must be compelling. Think about Harvard's approach to academic excellence and what that means to you. It recognizes the value of students who are not only academically exceptional but also meaningfully engaged in their world and open to new experiences. Additionally, Harvard's collegiate atmosphere

flourishes based on a dynamic synergy among and between students and faculty. It is looking for “students who will be the best educators of one another and their professors— individuals who will inspire those around them during their College years and beyond.” Harvard prides itself on its close-knit undergraduate community. This emphasis is apparent in the Harvard Houses, where teaching, learning and living go hand-in-hand. How might you contribute to this environment? Perhaps you’d like to sing in a choir? Run a certain club? Is there a research program working alongside professors that is of interest to you? The key is to demonstrate how you will live in community with others in a positive way.

Harvard University supplemental essay prompts (optional)

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**

Your goal is to discuss unusual circumstances that provide a better context to your life experience. This may be something you did not choose to share in your Common Application (or Universal College Application) Essay response but feel is essential to a deeper understanding of you. Consider what this experience(s) reflects about your personal qualities, personality, and character. How do these circumstances influence your perspective and aspirations? How might your background make Harvard a particularly good fit for you?

■ **Travel, living, or working experiences in your own or other communities**

Have you traveled or lived in a place or places that made a significant impact on you? Keep in mind this includes your local community or anywhere else in the world! Here, again, is an opportunity to provide further context for your life-experience. Discuss interesting extracurricular, cultural or intellectual experiences and how they have impacted your perspectives about the world. What did you learn from these experiences and what do they reveal about you? Think about how you engage with both familiar and new environments, cultures, and activities. How will your past experiences enrich the Harvard educational environment?

■ **What you would want your future college roommate to know about you**

This question asks you to share something significant about your day-to-day way of being. You can discuss just about anything here! Although you could approach this essay in a somewhat playful manner, do not be tempted to address a topic for its shock value. It's important that your response is genuine and conveys your personality in an appropriate tone. Remember: Harvard is looking for students who will be excellent educators; think about how that might relate to the things you'd choose to tell a future roommate situation in particular and the Harvard community in general.

■ **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**

This response allows you to discuss something that is important to you and to demonstrate how you think about intellectual problems. This is an exercise in creative and critical thinking. It also provides a platform for you to convey your enthusiasm for learning. What excited you about this intellectual experience? How did the experience challenge your preconceptions? How did it impact your way of thinking? What was your reaction? How did it change your perspective? This response offers insight into your potential to thrive in the demanding academic environment at Harvard.

■ **How you hope to use your college education**

With a look toward the future, this is an opportunity to discuss why Harvard is the ideal place for you to achieve your goals. It also allows you to discuss your motivations, passions, values, and perspectives on learning. Discuss what excites you about the overall experience at Harvard. Look toward the future and how the Harvard educational experience will support you. Can you articulate the value of a Harvard education? Your response will convey your aspirations, temperament, leadership, and potential to succeed at Harvard.

■ **A list of books you have read during the past twelve months**

As you compile your list, think about the breadth and depth of content. You do not need to include every book you read in the last year. Select the ones that best demonstrate your interests/passions or allowed you to explore something novel. This list should

include the books you are most excited about but also the ones that challenged your way of thinking. Each title is a means of interacting with the world of ideas and communicates something significant about you.

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- **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.**

This prompt is not only asking you to detail your thought process but also to consider your values and how you or others impact the world around you/them through actions. The focus here is on the fact that there is a “choice” to be made after weighing the options. What do “honesty,” “integrity” and “community” mean to you? Clearly Harvard holds honesty as the essential building block of community. Why do you believe honesty is essential to community? How important are shared values in a community? If you are writing about your own actions, think about what prompted you to act or prevented you from acting: What did you do? What was its result? If you are writing about someone you observed, discuss his or her choice. Why was it significant and what did you think about the behavior? In either case, what was at stake based on the decision and what was the impact of the choice that was made?

- **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?**

The heart of this prompt gets at your impact on those around you. Remember, Harvard is looking for “students who will be the best educators of one another and their professors— individuals who will inspire those around them during their College years and beyond.” This also asks you to articulate your ideas about the characteristics of a good citizen and leader. This is an opportunity to discuss your imagined role within your peer group at Harvard as well as in a broader sense as you look toward the future. You must also demonstrate your ability to reflect on society from different perspectives. Think about what you can do to contribute to the world in a meaningful way—from a

school club to a larger cultural or religious community to the global society. What might you do to inspire, support, or educate others?

- **Each year a substantial number of students admitted to Harvard defer their admission for one year or take time off during college. If you decided in the future to choose either option, what would you like to do?**

This is a good prompt to address if you are considering a gap year or if you have plans to take time off while at college to pursue a particular interest. This could be career related, a personal improvement quest, or something else. Explain what you plan to do during this time away from Harvard, your rationale, and what you hope to gain from the experience. How would you embrace this opportunity to gain some skill or explore something meaningfully? How might this experience help you achieve future goals and enhance the community at Harvard upon your return.

Tip: You will want to be sure to create a realistic plan for your deferred admission year; saying you will start a business, without naming the business, any kind of business plan, and any reasonable evidence for the business's projected success will therefore not make for a compelling essay. However, perhaps you would like a year to pursue an internship with an agency whose cause you support; work on a political campaign with which you already have a relationship; volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, etc. Be specific and make sure your plans are plausible, motivated by your values, and supported by past experiences.

- **Harvard has long recognized the importance of student body diversity of all kinds. We welcome you to write about distinctive aspects of your background, personal development or the intellectual interests you might bring to your Harvard classmates.**

How might your particular life experience add value to the diverse student body at Harvard? How might you enrich discussions or provide different perspectives? This is primarily about what unique insights and perspectives you bring to the table; consider how you might engage with your classmates differently based on your personal experiences. Think about your culture, significant experiences that shaped you, your passions, or issues of concern to your unique intellectual pursuits. Some examples might be: discussing your upbringing as a Catholic in an Evangelical area; how your particular background as an international student will diversify the Harvard class; how being a

Democrat or a Republican has impacted your thinking; and countless other examples. In short, what makes YOU stand out?

Final thoughts on applying to Harvard

The Harvard admissions committee seeks not only well-rounded individuals; it also covets students who are intensely creative in some discipline or activity, reflective, passionate, artistic, compassionate, talented, and brilliant. Do not be intimidated by these characteristics. Instead, strive to convey your unique self, life experiences, aspirations, motivations, interests and perspectives in a compelling way.

Not surprisingly, the applicant pool at Harvard is extremely competitive. It received 57,786 undergraduate applications for the class of 2025. Only 2,320 were offered admission. What is the best way to stand out in this outstanding applicant pool? Be you, convey your strengths, and express unique identity through your application and essay responses!

Take solace in the fact that Harvard is assessing your overall application in an effort to provide the best fit for you as a student. Stay focused and try not to get overwhelmed. Make sure to adhere to deadlines as you dedicate yourself to this process. Plan appropriately to give yourself the time you need to put forth your best self. And remember, this is a two-way street; you need to do your part to convince the admissions committee that you are the best match for Harvard, while also considering what appeals to YOU about the “big H.”

If you're applying to Harvard University, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from the highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

NYU Supplemental Essay Strategies [2021 – 2022]

Located in the middle of bustling lower Manhattan, New York, NYU’s campus is intertwined with the city. It is not a campus in a traditional sense – its buildings and lifestyle are organized around Washington Square Park, enabling students and faculty alike to take advantage of everything offered by this energetic area.

NYU grants degrees from its NYC campus along with campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai. In addition, it has satellite campuses in London, Accra, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv, Sydney and more; access to these locations around the world provide opportunities for a truly global undergraduate educational experience. Many students are particularly attracted to the ease with which they can study abroad and remain under the larger intellectual umbrella of the University.

NYU offers several admissions options including binding Early Decision I (November 1st deadline) and Early Decision II (January 1st deadline), as well as Regular Decision (January 5th deadline). In addition to the main Common Application essay, NYU requires only one additional essay response.

The admissions committee is already aware of your grades, test scores, letters of recommendation, honors/awards, activities and whatever you wrote about in your main Common Application essay. Now is your chance to share your passion for NYU! Be careful not to repeat information you shared in your main essay. Use your NYU response to convince the admissions committee that NYU is the best place for you and to show how you might contribute to the diverse community at NYU.

NYU’s supplemental essay question

Why NYU?

We would like to know more about your interest in NYU. What motivated you to apply to NYU? Why have you applied or expressed interest in a particular campus, school, college, program, and/or area of study? If you have applied to more than one, please also tell us why you are interested in these additional areas of study or campuses. We want to understand – *Why NYU? (400 word maximum)*

The sole purpose of this prompt is to provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate your fit with NYU. You will want to do this in 3 ways (and all 3!): prove an intimate knowledge of NYU and its offerings, of NYC and all it has to offer, and of what makes you stand out as a diverse contributor to the NYU community.

You only have 400 words to communicate what draws you to NYU specifically- to the campus, school, college, program and/or specific area of study. Think about your personal connection to the school and the city. Don't just list interesting things about the city—you are not a tour guide. Instead, explain why those things are so important to you and your potential growth.

Consider your values and how the unique qualities/opportunities at NYU appeal to you. In short, make a personal connection. How might the approach to education at NYU support your learning? This might include: studying abroad, potential experience with internships, relationships with people from around the world, specific academic requirements or programs, career-related opportunities, or anything else you feel is important to your success. Ultimately, you want to prove, not only your own qualifications, but your informed knowledge of NYU and the research you've done to be certain NYU would be the perfect fit for you.

In addition to demonstrating an intimate knowledge of NYU as a university, this essay also offers you a chance to think about what living and learning in a fast paced city like New York might be like: how is it similar to what you are accustomed to, or perhaps different? What are the particular reasons you find this setting appealing? Once you've explained the appeal of the city, you must also demonstrate your independence because you will need to be independent in order to navigate the NYU world. How will you survive, contribute to and thrive in this atmosphere? How will you embrace this environment? How can you benefit from this experience? Why is studying at NYU your true calling?

Keep in mind that NYU is assembling a first-year class that represents regional, global, and cultural diversity. NYU values difference and supports students of all identities and backgrounds. Don't underestimate yourself and your story. Each applicant has something to offer that can enrich this distinct cohort. How might you utilize this opportunity to grow as a person, as a global citizen, as a future leader?

Final thoughts on applying to NYU

To offer some context for where you might stand: NYU's Fall 2020 acceptance rate was 21%. Although NYU offers one of the most flexible standardized testing policies (see NYU admission

website for details), the average SAT scores are 738 for Math and 701 for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing. The average ACT score is 32. This is a competitive applicant pool.

Although it is wise to keep these statistics in mind, take a moment to relax and plan. Make sure you meet all deadlines and allow yourself adequate time to write and revise your essays. Consider the best way to reflect your personal experiences, convey your interests, express your enthusiasm for learning, and demonstrate how and why NYU is the best place for you!

If you're applying to NYU, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from a highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

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Princeton University [2021 – 2022]

It will come as no surprise that Princeton University is among the top schools in the nation and is recognized globally for academic excellence. This Ivy League school is renowned as a major research university as well as an outstanding liberal arts college. In addition to the Common Application, Universal College Application or Coalition Application essay, Princeton also requires supplemental writing responses. These additional essays help the admissions committee to understand your particular strengths and potential contributions to the Princeton community comprehensively. Princeton prides itself on the diversity of talents, achievements, perspectives, and interests of its student body. At the same time, it is looking for a freshman class that shares the following qualities: “integrity, a deep interest in learning and a devotion to both academic and non-academic pursuits.” Think about how you can contribute to Princeton as well as how Princeton can support your aspirations.

The best way to begin is by doing your research. Adhere to deadlines and word limits. Spend time looking over the Princeton website, get to know what current undergraduates are saying about the school, familiarize yourself with the various majors, and imagine yourself there. If possible, visit the campus (virtually), allow yourself to get excited about this opportunity, and make every effort to gain a sense of why Princeton is the ideal academic environment for you!

Located in a suburban setting, Princeton is primarily a residential campus with a strong liberal arts focus. Its residential college structure, freshman seminars, and preceptorial system support the tight-knit student community. These are hallmarks of an education at Princeton and demonstrate the university’s commitment to student-centered learning within the context of a diverse student body, faculty, and staff.

Remember to allow your writing to express your voice as you address the following Princeton supplemental questions; consider how your responses reveal your intellectual curiosity, passion for learning, and engagement with the world.

Princeton University short essay questions

Briefly elaborate on an activity, organization, work experience, or hobby that has been particularly meaningful to you. *(Please respond in about 150 words)*

Use this opportunity to discuss an interesting aspect of an extracurricular activity or work experience that imparts something significant about your character. Many students can talk about leadership or collaboration in general terms, but you will stand out if you provide specifics, as these are far more revealing, distinctive, and engaging. For example, if you were involved with the Girl Scouts, focus on a particular event in the Girl Scouts where you took on a leadership role or engaged others in a particular way and explain why that role was meaningful to you. Or perhaps there was a specific incident in your job that required you to take on additional responsibility to be particularly creative, showcasing what that reveals about your values. Consider what makes this activity or work experience noteworthy and what it demonstrates about your character.

Your Voice

Please respond to each question in an essay of about 250 words.

At Princeton, we value diverse perspectives and the ability to have respectful dialogue about difficult issues. Share a time when you had a conversation with a person or a group of people about a difficult topic. What insight did you gain, and how would you incorporate that knowledge into your thinking in the future?

Here, you might want to emphasize two things: how this conversation influenced your thinking (eg your long-held beliefs were challenged and that helped you to understand or reconsider something new); and, how the conversation remained respectful (eg, you were tempted to walk out but did not) and what you'd like to do to continue having both hard, but also respectful, exchanges in the future. Finally, be sure to say a word or two about why these hard conversations are nonetheless important—Princeton clearly wants its students to be having them!

Read: [7 Simple Steps to Writing an Excellent Diversity Essay](#)

Princeton has a longstanding commitment to service and civic engagement. Tell us how your story intersects (or will intersect) with these ideals.

Think about your involvement thus far in service and civic engagement. What have you done to help others; to serve your country; to volunteer your time? Then, research what Princeton students do to stay civically engaged. How would you, with your background, contribute to

those things already in place at Princeton, and how might you add to or improve what already exists?

More About You

Please respond to each question in 50 words or fewer. There are no right or wrong answers. Be yourself!

Note: In this section, make sure to include both the “what” and the “why”— for example, “What brings me joy is X because of Y.” Your task is both to describe and to explain, to show logical and articulate thinking.

What is a new skill you would like to learn in college?

What brings you joy?

What song represents the soundtrack of your life at this moment?

Final thoughts on applying to Princeton

Each of these essay prompts ask you to share something personal about yourself, discuss how an experience impacted you, and explain how you make sense of your world. They ask you to articulate your values and provide insight into your thinking process. They also reveal how you evaluate information and make decisions. Select the themed essay topic that strikes a cord with you. Make sure to convey your enthusiasm for that subject and for Princeton.

It is no surprise that Princeton has a highly competitive and impressive applicant pool. It received 37,601 undergraduate applications for the class of 2025. Only 1,647 were offered admission. Add to that average SAT scores above 1500, and average ACT scores around 33, and you get a better sense of the level of competition. However, keep in mind that Princeton is committed to a holistic approach to the admissions process. This means they use your essay responses to round out the picture of you as a prospective student. The supplemental essays are your chance to share critical information about yourself. There is no magic formula to gain admission to this prestigious Ivy League school. As you survey the numbers, it is clear that you

must use your essays as an opportunity to differentiate yourself from your peers and to demonstrate that you belong at Princeton!

If you're applying to Princeton University, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from the highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

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University of California System Personal Insight Questions [2021 - 2022]

The University of California System or UC's, as they are commonly known, consist of 9 campuses that utilize the same application. They are: UC Berkeley (Cal), UC Santa Cruz, UC Davis, UC Merced, UC Santa Barbara, UC Los Angeles (UCLA), UC Irvine, UC Riverside, and UC San Diego. You will use the same responses for all the campuses to which you select to apply. Take a look at what each campus has to offer—academic programs, clubs, activities, location, internships, intramural options, career services, research opportunities, professors and anything else that attracts you to a particular school and consider how you might showcase your fit.

UC Admissions asks you to write several short essays in order to gain insight into who you are on a more person level and how you might contribute to the school to which you are applying. As a freshman applicant, you must respond to 4 of the 8 essay prompts. Each of your 4 responses is limited to 350-words. Read through the prompts and address the 4 that resonate with your life experience. Some of the questions have some overlap in the topics you might discuss so select the options that all you to demonstrate specific attributes. No single question is better to answer than the other; it's just a matter of which questions are a better match for you. Consider the combination of prompts that will allow you to communicate different aspects of your identity.

The University of California System personal insight questions

UC personal insight question #1

Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.

This can be an intimidating question if you approach it too broadly. Instead, think about a specific example of your leadership in action. Consider instances where you can trace a tangible positive outcome back to a specific conflict resolution/action/decision/negotiation/collaboration. This effort could have been within your family, school, community, job, peer group, religious organization, athletic/academic team, or anything along these lines. What did you learn about leadership from this experience? What did you learn about yourself as a leader? How did this experience change your perspective and the

way you interact with others? Make sure you address all parts of these questions and the additional implied question—what kind a leader might you be in the UC community?

UC personal insight question #2

Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

This prompt provides an opportunity to express your creative passion and your thought process. Do you have a particularly creative skill? Do you think about issues in inventive ways? Was there an issue or problem you approached in a creative or novel manner? Remember this can be something school related or otherwise. Select a specific example and express your enthusiasm. What was the outcome? How did your creativity, problem solving, innovative thinking, or artistic ability impact others? How does your creativity impact the way you learn, how you interact with others, your lifestyle or your intended area of study and/or career? How does this example reflect something significant about you? And why is that important? How might you embrace your creativity while you are in college?

UC personal insight question #3

What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

This prompt allows you to detail something you have done for an extended time through which you can demonstrate growth and deeper understanding. It can be something that came naturally or something you worked hard to develop over time. Be cautious not to let your response to this prompt overlap with what you discussed for question #2 regarding creativity—you want to tell the Admissions Committee something that represents a different facet of your abilities. This could be anything from playing a particular instrument to playing a specific sport or any other activity that demonstrates development through an extensive process. What sparked your interest? Why is this meaningful to you? How did you explore and develop this talent or skill? Did you have to sacrifice anything to pursue this talent or skill? What were the challenges and rewards? What did you learn about yourself in the process? How might you continue to nurture/utilize this talent or skill in the future, possibly even on campus?

UC personal insight question #4

Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

In broad strokes, this is about how you make things happen regardless of the cards you are dealt. It also speaks to your resilience and ability to adapt to different circumstances. Your response to this prompt really gets at the question of how you use what you have to succeed—whether you are fortunate enough to have had many educational opportunities or have had to work to overcome great challenges, what have you achieved and learned about yourself in the process? If you embraced an opportunity to experience something new (culture, activity, volunteer experience, academic enrichment opportunity, etcetera), how did the experience change the way you look at the world? How did it influence how you think about yourself? If you overcame significant challenges (learning disability, difficult family situation/relationship, financial challenges, particular hardship, etcetera), what motivated you to do more? What steps did you take to improve the situation? How did overcoming this barrier make you stronger? How did it change your perspective or attitude? Whether you are addressing an opportunity or barrier, how does what you shared inspire you for the future?

UC personal insight question #5

Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?

This question is similar to the second part of question #4 about the barriers you faced. This is the place to reveal reasons why your extracurricular involvement or grades might not be as competitive as other applicants—just make sure it does not come off as making excuses. Your most significant challenge could relate to a personal loss, disability, conflicts within your community or family, or coming to terms with a non-conventional identity. It is also possible that you are still working to overcome this challenge. The important thing is to identify the challenge, discuss what you have done to try to overcome it and then explain its impact on your academic achievement. If you select this prompt, your story is likely to be very personal. You don't have to shy away from this one, but you will need to give it a great deal of thought so you can convey its significance. It is also important to consider how the lessons you learned through this process prepares you for academic success in college.

UC personal insight question #6

Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

This prompt asks you to convey your passion and enthusiasm for a specific academic subject. It not only reveals the topic you find interesting but also how you explore your interests and how you engage with learning on various levels—inside and/or outside of the classroom. Think about what you did to dive deeper in to the subject—volunteer activities, internships, research, clubs, advanced classes, and whatever else you did to further your interests. What makes this subject so exciting for you? How has the knowledge you acquired impacted your perception of the world? What have you learned about yourself in your pursuit of the subject? This is also a great place to discuss your potential major or other areas you are interested in studying in college. If it applies, you can also link this to your future career. As they read your response, the admissions committee will be thinking about how you might explore this and other topics at their school.

UC personal insight question #7

What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

This question is pretty straightforward. It addresses how you, as an individual, make a positive impact on those around you. Identify something you did to help others. Many applicants use a specific volunteer experience as an example. Others discuss a team or group. Identify your role within the school, group, or community. What was the issue/problem/deficiency/need? How did you help address it? Why was this important to you? How do you know you had a positive effect? What was your motivation to help? Did you work with others or alone? What did you learn about yourself in the process? Is this something you might continue while in college?

UC personal insight question #8

Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you stand out as a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?

Yes, this is a wide open question! Before you decide how you want to answer this prompt, make a quick list of the characteristics you feel make you an outstanding fit with the University of California System. Then look over your application and the other questions you already

responded to and see if there is anything missing. This is your opportunity to tell the admissions committee anything you feel is significant that you were not able to discuss within the context of the other prompts. Although the advice the University of California Admissions online portal gives for this essay includes that you shouldn't "be afraid to brag a little," this prompt is not the only part of the application to highlight your clearest strengths. You could skip this essay and still represent yourself and your talents effectively by choosing four of the other seven prompts. If you didn't already answer prompt #3 and want to close on a strong note, this essay can be a useful time to highlight something singular about yourself. Admissions Committees tend to read essays in chronological order, so if you do select prompt #8, make sure you end on a strong and interesting note. This is a good opportunity to link what you discuss to the University of California System in some way. Maybe you have already been involved in a pre-college program at a particular UC campus—a creative writing program for high school students, for example—and formed meaningful connections with faculty members in the process. Mentioning details like this can help demonstrate you want to be part of the social fabric of a UC campus and are more likely to attend a UC school if accepted, which can certainly help sway an Admissions Committee.

Final thoughts on applying to the UC System

Competition for admission to the UC System is highly competitive. This is especially true if you are an out-of-state candidate. You must work to set yourself apart from other applicants. As you address the essay prompts, keep the 350-word limit for each response in mind and do not overlap information you discussed in other essays. Strive to use each response to tell the admissions committee something that demonstrates a different aspect of who you are. Remember, the admissions officers already have the numbers associated with your application (GPA, etcetera). Plan out your responses and make sure to allow adequate time to write and revise your essays. The short essays are your opportunity to share more about what makes you unique. Consider your motivation, inspiration, values, learning style, character, personal history, and goals for the future.

If you're applying to the University of California System, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from the highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

University of Michigan [2022 – 2023]

The University of Michigan is a large (over 40,000 students), predominantly residential campus located in the small city of Ann Arbor. This well known school has an outstanding reputation for research, academic rigor and athletic spirit—it is often referred to as a public-ivy. It offers a non-binding Early Action option with an application deadline of November 1st and accepts either the Common Application or Coalition Application with no preference. In the university’s efforts to gain a deeper understanding of the sort of student you might become at the University of Michigan, your application will ask you to write a main essay for whichever application type you select, as well as three supplemental essays.

Before you begin writing, take the time to research and identify what appeals to you most about the school. Consider location, athletics, academic programs, residential colleges, professors, particular clubs, study abroad programs, and anything else that attracts you to the University of Michigan. These responses are your opportunity to share more about yourself to make the strongest possible case for both your potential fit with the school and for the ways in which an education at UM will prepare you for the future.

[Get a free consultation: Click here to schedule a call to find out how our admissions experts can help YOU get accepted to the University of Michigan! > >](#)

Below are some suggestions to help you address the supplemental prompts.

The University of Michigan supplemental essay questions

University of Michigan supplemental essay #1

Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine, interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage. Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it. (Required for all applicants; 1,500 character limit)

If you have applied to other selective schools, you are likely to be familiar with this sort of “diversity” prompt. What they are getting at is your personal story and how you might relate with others of similar and different life experiences. While there might be some overlap in how

these communities/groups are defined, try to focus on the precise intersection that shapes your sense of identity. Describe how each factor contributes to who you are and how you engage with the world around you. Your story does not have to be exotic; it just needs to reveal your sense of self-awareness, of both the world you come from and your place within it. Diversity is essential to the University of Michigan, as showcased on its website: “U-M is committed to creating a campus environment of equity and inclusion where students, faculty, and staff with diverse backgrounds live, learn, and work together.” As you tell your story, consider how you will contribute to and benefit from this diverse atmosphere. How might you connect with other students, faculty, staff and the community at the University? Do your research and consider specific ways you can get involved.

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University of Michigan supplemental essay #2

Describe the unique qualities that attract you to the specific undergraduate College or School (including preferred admission and dual degree programs) to which you are applying at the University of Michigan. How would that curriculum support your interests? (Required for all applicants; 2,750 character limit)

This is another opportunity to demonstrate that you’ve done your homework and identified distinctive aspects of the program at the University of Michigan. You must communicate what appeals to you and how the specific program/curriculum will prepare you to achieve your goals. If you are undecided, you can speak to your areas of interest and how you might explore them at the University of Michigan. Consider the 14 different undergraduate Schools and Colleges it boasts to determine which might be the best prospective home for you. Be sure to notice that many programs at the university do not require application until your second year of college. Most students at the University of Michigan are admitted to the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) for their first year of study, while others (business school students, for example) go through the Preferred Admission process while still in high school, which allows them sophomore entry to a particular School/College provided they meet certain academic conditions.

If you are applying to a School/College that predominantly admits new classes via Preferred Admission (e.g., Ross School of Business), it is critical that you decide now, while still a high school student, which School/College you’re targeting; it can be difficult to transfer from one School/College to another after your first year of study, even with exceptional grades. Review

the degree/graduation requirements—what do you find attractive or what might be beneficial to you about this particular school? Why is this specific school such a good match for your interests, learning style, or ultimate goals? Provide details and support your statements with reasons why a particular program or School at the University of Michigan is the ideal place for you!

School of Education applicants only

Discuss where you would like to teach and/or the types of students you would like to teach and how you developed this commitment.

This is a question asking as much for information about your teaching future and desires as it is for your teaching history and your passions and skills up to the present. Be sure to demonstrate past experience, passion, and values that are all relevant to the field of teaching, as well as relatively specific goals and reasons behind them.

Final thoughts on applying to the University of Michigan

As a school that accepts the Common Application, the University of Michigan is committed to a holistic review of your application materials. This means it takes all aspects of your application into account. Don't miss your opportunity to stand out among your peers; provide a genuine sense of your character through your essay responses!

To provide some context for where you might stand, of the 79,743 students who applied to enter the class of 2025 at the University of Michigan, 16,071 or about 20% were offered admission. The interquartile (middle 50th percent) ranges for SAT scores were between 1400 and 1540. For ACT scores, they ranged from 32 to 35. The average entering GPA was 3.9 on a 4.0 scale. This is a competitive applicant pool.

While keeping these statistics in mind, take a moment to relax and plan. Make sure you meet all deadlines and allow yourself adequate time to write and revise your essays. Consider the best way to communicate your personal experiences, convey your interests, express your enthusiasm for learning, and demonstrate how and why the University of Michigan is the best place for you!

If you're applying to the University of Michigan, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from a highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

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University of Pennsylvania [2021 - 2022]

The University of Pennsylvania, or Penn, was established in 1790 and is one of the oldest universities in America. Located in Philadelphia, this prestigious Ivy League school offers an exceptional education in a diverse urban setting on a primarily residential campus. Known for its top-notch research and undergraduate programs that focus on practical applications, grounded in a strong liberal arts foundation, Penn provides many opportunities for students to investigate different areas of interest. Think about how you might embrace this approach and the overall academic climate at Penn.

It should come as no surprise that Penn is steeped in tradition, although the curriculum is flexible. The four undergraduate schools (College of Arts and Science, Penn Engineering, School of Nursing, and The Wharton School) pride themselves on providing an integrated and functional education. As the school's website says, Penn students "combine theoretical and practical thinking while developing the tools they need to innovate and lead in a world that demands an increasingly broad perspective." Consider how these values will impact your experience at Penn.

Penn accepts the Common Application or the Coalition Application and also requires a supplemental essay, which helps Penn gain a more holistic view of you as a potential student. Penn states: "Ideal candidates are inspired to emulate our founder Benjamin Franklin by applying their knowledge in 'service to society.'" Your Common Application offers a window to the admissions committee about your grades and test scores, as well as the level of rigor in your high school curriculum.

Penn offers a binding early decision option with a November 1st deadline. If Penn is your first choice, consider this option because the rate of admission is higher during early decision. Early decision may also be the best approach if you have family alumni ties to the school. (Alumni affiliation receives the most consideration during the early decision program.) You are allowed to apply early decision to Penn and early action to other non-binding or non-restrictive early action programs. Always check with the specific schools for guidelines.

The Penn supplemental essay

The supplemental essay provides you with the opportunity to show how you are an ideal match for Penn, and how Penn will help you to accomplish your college goals. In the essay, look for

ways to illustrate the ways in which you engage with and think about the world around you. The admissions committee wants to understand what matters to you and why, so spend some time thinking about your values and perspectives, and how best to communicate them.

Before you sit down to begin writing your essay, try to also learn as much as possible about Penn's approach to education. Exploring their website will help familiarize you with the school's distinctive character, while also giving you a sense of the campus and academic atmosphere. If possible, plan a visit to the campus, speak with current students, read student blogs, and visualize yourself as a student at Penn. In short, identify what makes the school a good fit for you.

Penn supplemental essay #1

Considering the specific undergraduate school you have selected, how will you explore your academic and intellectual interests at the University of Pennsylvania? (300-450 words)

For students applying to the coordinated dual-degree and specialized programs, please answer these questions in regard to your single-degree school choice; your interest in the coordinated dual-degree or specialized program may be addressed through the program-specific essay.

This prompt invites you to discuss why Penn will be the right place for you, and how you plan to flourish there, personally and academically. Here are things to ask yourself when mapping out your essay answer:

- Was there an “ah-ha!” moment that sparked your intellectual and academic interests? If so, that’s a great place to begin! Don’t be afraid to show your excitement, but ground it in specifics as they relate to the educational experience available to you at Penn. Include examples of how your personal experiences make the programs at Penn a good fit for you.
- Consider why you are a good fit for the undergraduate school of your choice (College of Arts and Sciences, School of Nursing, The Wharton School, or Penn Engineering). Include examples of how your personal experiences make the programs at Penn a good fit for you.
- What specific academic, service, and/or research opportunities might enhance your journey?

- How do you hope to contribute to the collegiate environment at Penn? How do you envision yourself positively impacting the overall Penn campus community?
- Discuss why you are driven to attend Penn and how a Penn education will help you to affect change in the world.

Penn supplemental essay #2

At Penn, learning and growth happen outside of the classrooms, too. How will you explore the community at Penn? Consider how this community will help shape your perspective and identity, and how your identity and perspective will help shape this community. *(150-200 words)*

This prompt invites you to address how you might contribute to and benefit from the extracurricular atmosphere at Penn. It's tough to do this in only 200 words, so try to reveal your unique identity and perspective in the context of your interests outside the classroom.

- One way to address this prompt is by discussing your cultural background: how will it add to the Penn community? How will you learn and grow from interacting with those from backgrounds and cultures different from your own? How will your background add to the Penn community?
- Remember Penn's founder, Benjamin Franklin, was a philosopher and inventor, focused on service to society. Reflect on Penn-specific opportunities to get involved and be of service in the local Philly community.
- Your response requires you to look at your identity and perspective and consider ways you mesh with the Penn community. What do you bring with you based on your life experience?

Final thoughts on applying to Penn

This is an increasingly competitive application process. Penn received 44,961 undergraduate applications for the class of 2023. Only 3,446, or 7.7%, were offered admission—a record low. Here are a few more numbers to consider. Ninety-six percent of the students admitted were in the top 10% of their high school class with median SAT scores of 740 in evidence-based reading and writing; 780 in math. Half of admitted applicants had an ACT score of 32 and 35.

The best way to differentiate yourself in this prestigious crowd is through your essays. Penn is interested in your personal stories, life experiences, hopes and aspirations. It seeks to attract and foster great thinkers and future leaders who will play constructive roles in society. Discuss what is meaningful to you, project the value you might add to the campus community, and convey how and why Penn is the ideal place for you to start transforming your dreams into your future. Take the time and invest the energy to reveal your best self!

If you're applying to the University of Pennsylvania, you already know you're up against tight competition. But don't be overwhelmed: start early so you have adequate time to thoroughly research, prepare, and complete all aspects of your application. A well thought-out application will make your candidacy much more compelling.

If you're applying to the University of Pennsylvania, you already know you're up against tight competition. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from the highly competitive applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

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Yale University [2021 – 2022]

Not surprisingly, Yale University is consistently ranked among the top universities in the world. It accepts the Common Application, Coalition Application, and QuestBridge Application. All three applications require a personal statement essay plus additional Yale-specific short answers and a Yale writing supplement. For applicants interested in engineering or computer science, there is a third optional essay. This prestigious Ivy League school prides itself on providing undergraduates with an exceptional foundation in liberal arts education that focuses on cultivating knowledge and leadership skills. “Yale’s commitment to each student – to challenge, expand, and ultimately better understand the life of one’s own mind through undergraduate study.” The supplemental writing responses are a chance for you to convey how the Yale experience might augment your passions and perspectives in terms of learning, living, and preparing you for the future.

If Yale is your first choice, it offers a single-choice early action program for freshman applicants (November 1st deadline). If you choose to use this option, you may not apply to early decision or early action programs at other schools. There are a few exceptions to this rule, check the Yale admissions website for details. Under this program, Yale will notify you of its admission decision in mid-December. The deadline for submission of applications for regular action is January 2nd, and admissions decisions will be released by April 1st.

Before you begin writing your essay(s), thoroughly research all that Yale has to offer and consider the ways in which Yale aligns, or does not align, with your values and your college goals. This is a time to get excited about the prospect of attending Yale! Visit the website, speak with current students and alumni, and envision yourself as part of its exceptional learning community. The curriculum at Yale is designed to provide both breadth and depth of study, laying a foundation for students to pursue inspired lives and careers. It strives to foster independent critical thinking. Yale is one of the only universities that allow you to try out your classes before you finalize your schedule. The first ten days of each semester are an opportunity to visit a number of classes to determine which are most interesting to you!

Located in the small town of New Haven, Connecticut, in an urban setting that is primarily a residential campus, Yale offers a supportive community-feel through its system of twelve residential colleges. This configuration, complete with its own residential deans and masters, creates a sense of intimacy within the larger university. Residential deans serve as primary personal and academic advisors. Masters work with students to shape the residential

community. This is a powerfully dynamic way of bringing together students and faculty. Think about how this structure can support your intellectual growth.

Yale University short answer questions

Applicants submitting the Coalition Application, [Common Application](#), or QuestBridge Application are asked to respond to the following short answer questions:

- Students at Yale have time to explore their academic interests before committing to one or more major fields of study. Many students either modify their original academic direction or change their minds entirely. As of this moment, what academic areas seem to fit your interests or goals most comfortably? Please indicate up to three from the [list](#) provided.

This is not a trick question. Yale is trying to gauge your unique interests. Indicate up to three of your top academic areas of study.

- Why do these areas appeal to you? *(125 words or fewer)*

The challenge in this response is discussing your rationale for your selected areas in less than 125 words. Consider your experience thus far in these areas. What sparked your interest? What burning question or issue motivates you? How might these concentrations support your long-term goals? Provide some context to support your interests.

- What is it about Yale that has led you to apply? *(125 words or fewer)*

Here again, you are under significant word limitations. Don't underestimate this prompt. It is extremely important to demonstrate good fit in your discussion—what unique aspects of an education at Yale attract you? This is an opportunity to convey your enthusiasm for a potential Yale experience. Sometimes making a list can help you get started. Then review your list and make sure each reason relates specifically to Yale. Consider both what Yale has to offer you and what you might be able to offer the Yale community.

Applicants applying with the QuestBridge Application will complete the first set of short answer questions via the Yale QuestBridge Questionnaire, available on the Yale Admissions Status Portal after an application has been received.

[Click here to schedule a free call to find out how our admissions experts can help YOU get accepted to Yale!](#)

Yale University additional short answer questions (Short takes)

Applicants submitting the Coalition Application or Common Application will also respond to the following short answer questions, in no more than 200 characters (approximately 35 words):

1. What inspires you?

This response touches on what motivates you as well as what you find valuable. Discuss something that makes a difference in your way of thinking and subsequently influences your actions and/or behavior. Think about what your response might convey about your character.

Realize that when writing about “inspiration,” you need to write about something that motivated you to act, to change, to contribute, to do — not merely something that changed your emotional state. If a scene or experience motivated you to feel wonderful or terrible, angry or serene, and didn’t move you to action, the story will be ineffective, and well uninspiring.

2. Yale’s residential colleges regularly host conversations with guests representing a wide range of experiences and accomplishments. What person, past or present, would you invite to speak and what would you ask them to discuss?

Although you are under significant word count limitations, let your imagination go with this one! The person you identify is just as important as the topic you ask them to address. Your response reflects your thinking process, your perception of the world, and your engagement with others. It will also reflect your values and character.

3. You are teaching a Yale course. What is it called?

This is a chance to infuse some fun and creativity into your response. Be careful to avoid any controversial statements. You never know how your suggestion might be interpreted so try to steer clear of potentially offensive topics.

4. Yale students embrace the concept of ‘and’ rather than ‘or’, pursuing arts and sciences, tradition and innovation, defined goals and surprising detours. What is an example of an “and” that you embrace?

When have you embraced seeming contradictions? How do you reconcile whatever conflict exists between the two poles? Or do you revel in the contradiction and develop different talents and skill sets? Whether your answer reflects one of the suggestions above or is completely different (vegetarian food and BBQs; captain of the cross-country team and needlepoint, classical pianist who plays electric guitar in a rock band, or ????) Provide an example of your “and,” while also discussing succinctly how you choose to handle the contraction.

Yale supplemental essay questions

Applicants submitting the Coalition Application or Common Application: use the two short essays (*250 words or fewer*) below to reflect on topics and personal experiences that will help the Admissions Committee learn more about you.

Yale supplemental essay question #1

Yale’s extensive course offerings and vibrant conversations beyond the classroom encourage students to follow their developing intellectual interests wherever they lead. Tell us about your engagement with a topic or idea that excites you. Why are you drawn to it?

Identify the idea or topic and then remember to convey your enthusiasm as you discuss what truly excites you about it! Consider what sparked and maintains your interest. Your response to this prompt helps to shed light on how you learn, the topics you are drawn to, as well as how you process the world around you. What makes learning fun for you?

Yale supplemental essay question #2

Please respond to one of the following prompts in 250 words or fewer. Please indicate the letter of the prompt you choose.

2A. Reflect on a community to which you feel connected. Why is it meaningful to you? You may define community however you like.

First define “community.” Then which of your community commitments do you want to discuss? Your community could be united by ethnicity, gender, abilities or disabilities, sports, the arts, politics, geography, religion, or a cause. What is the nature of your connection and your contribution? Why have you chosen to be a part of this community?

2B. Reflect on something that has given you great satisfaction. Why has it been important to you?

This question could be answered in so many ways! It could be a community service commitment that you find gratifying. It could be activism on behalf of a cause that is important to you. It could be an example of you caring for an elderly, younger, disabled or sick individual. It could be tutoring. It could be a challenge that you undertook and mastered.

However, the “what” is just part of the question. Why has it been so important to you that it belongs on your Yale application? That is equally important.

Stay away from the superficial “I found it extremely gratifying to help people” kind of answer, and go deeper. Why is helping people in this way important to you? Why is the cause important to you?

Additional requirement for applicants using the Coalition Application

Applicants submitting the Coalition Application: In addition to responding to the prompts above, upload an audio file, video, image, or document you have created. The upload should complement your response to one of the prompts. Above your response, include a one-sentence description of your upload. Please limit uploads to the following file types: mp3, mov, jpeg, word, pdf. Advanced editing is not necessary. Uploads provided via the Coalition Application will be reviewed by the Admissions Office only.

Review the [Supplementary Material instructions](#) for material that may be evaluated by Yale faculty.

Here, the goal is to complement– to fill in a gap, add to something– not to repeat. Add a new angle and degree of person-ability to your essay.

Final thoughts on applying to Yale

Applicants to Yale have exceedingly competitive profiles. Yale received 35,220 undergraduate applications for the class of 2024. In addition, consider average SAT scores around 1500 and average ACT scores around 34, and you get a sense of your cohort.

It is easy to get overwhelmed by the numbers, but it is heartening to bear in mind that Yale is dedicated to a holistic application evaluation process for admission. Your short answer responses and supplemental essay(s) facilitate a more comprehensive review of you as a prospective student at Yale. The admissions committee takes the time to read your responses carefully. Make sure you allow yourself appropriate time for thoughtful reflection and effective writing. Use your writing supplement to set you apart from your peers. The best approach is to be true to you and communicate your thoughts, experiences, hopes, and dreams in a way that highlights your genuine enthusiasm for an extraordinary educational journey at Yale!

If you're applying to Yale University, you can access Yale-caliber assistance to become the most competitive applicant you can be! Get the guidance of an experienced admissions specialist who will help you stand out from an exceptional applicant pool so you can apply with confidence, and get accepted! [Click here to get started!](#)

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Conclusion

You've taken an important step towards creating a successful application by reading our School-Specific Tips for Your Common Application Supplemental Essays guide.

Now it's time to move from general tips to personalized advice tailored just for you. Here's how it works:

1. [Explore our college admissions consulting & editing services](#) and find the option that best suits your needs.
2. You'll be paired with an admissions expert who will work with you 1-on-1 to help you discover your competitive advantage and use it to get accepted to your dream school.
3. Shoot us an email letting us know when you've been accepted. It makes our day!

Need help figuring out which service is best for you? [Click here for more guidance.](#)

GET ACCEPTED!