



# WHAT IS THE PERSONAL STATEMENT?



# YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAY - THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

- The Personal Statement is the main college application essay that is designed to get to know the applicant on a more personal level. The personal statement is your first opportunity to show who you are beyond your GPA, transcripts, and scores.
- Admissions officers will use the story you tell in the Personal Statement to get to know you, and a strong personal statement can make all the difference, especially for highly competitive schools.
- Personal statements, no matter how they may be worded, are ultimately asking one question: who are you?
- This question can be difficult to answer without any direction, so many applications give you a prompt or several to choose from to help you display who you are, what is important to you, and what your plans are.



# CHOOSING A PROMPT

- With so many prompts to choose from, it can be overwhelming to decide which to choose and what to write about.
- No matter the prompt, colleges are seeking the same thing from you – tell a story or narrative about yourself that reveals who you are as a person and what has led you to the decision of applying to these colleges.
- While it is always important to answer the question of the prompt, these prompts are designed to be general enough to give the writer a great deal of flexibility.
  - Therefore, instead of trying to pick a prompt and write on it, pick an experience, event, activity, etc about yourself that you think best highlights you as a person, and fit this story to whichever prompt it is most related to.
- If you start working on the personal statement early enough, you can try writing essays to a couple of the prompts and with time make your decision about which you think will best serve you for the application. The other essays could potentially apply to supplemental essay prompts as well!



# COMMON APP PROMPTS

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time.
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.



# COALITION APP PROMPTS

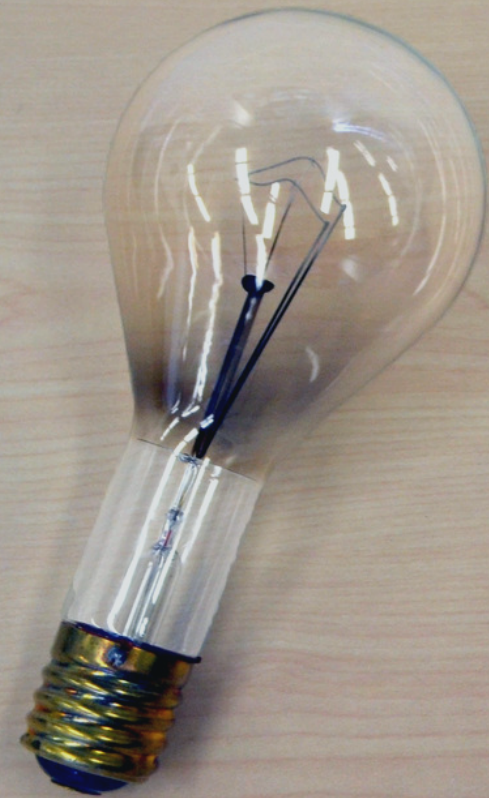
1. Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it.
2. Describe a time when you made a meaningful contribution to others in which the greater good was your focus. Discuss the challenges and rewards of making your contribution.
3. Has there been a time when you've had a long-cherished or accepted belief challenged? How did you respond? How did the challenge affect your beliefs?
4. What is the hardest part of being a teenager now? What's the best part? What advice would you give a younger sibling or friend (assuming they would listen to you)?
5. Submit an essay on a topic of your choice.



# GETTING STARTED: BRAINSTORMING

Before you set out to write the essay, you need to identify what message or image of yourself you want to send to admissions officers.

- Brainstorm key personality traits that you hope to demonstrate in the essay (leadership, character, resilience, curiosity, etc).
  - For each of the traits you pick out, brainstorm times in your life where you demonstrated these traits.
  - Brainstorm key moments that impacted you greatly and how that influenced your desire to go to college and pursue a particular field or career.
- With all of these ideas in mind, brainstorm how these experiences fit together, and if there are 2-3 particular items you can weave together into a story for your personal statement.





# QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Are there areas of your life that you feel are not adequately captured in any other part of the application?
- Have you had experiences that are unique to most other applicants that may set you apart?
- Are there activities in your life or goals that you are particularly passionate about?
- Do you embody specific values (respect, responsibility, independence, etc) and have shown them with your actions?





# START WRITING!

- The brainstorming process could theoretically go on forever and it can be difficult to zero in on a specific path for the essay, but at some point you have to start writing!
- Starting early enough on the first couple of drafts will give you plenty of time to refine your writing and change paths if needed.
- The first draft does not have to be pretty or particularly well structured, you don't even really need to pay attention to the word limit!
- Do your best in the first draft to get all the essential material in, and worry about the details and grammar later.



# REFINING YOUR FIRST DRAFT

- **Once you have drafted your first essay, the editing process can begin!**
  - Start with structural edits, such as having a strong introduction and conclusion, and establishing a logical flow throughout the essay.
  - Work on adding nuances to the stories or experiences you talk about.
  - Pay attention to the tone of your essay and if it is coming off how you intended it to.
- **Have as many people as you feel comfortable read your personal statement and give you feedback.**
  - Other people can give more objective, specific feedback to guide your editing process and strengthen the essay.
  - Teachers and counselors can be especially useful with structural advice and grammatical help.
  - Consider sending the essay to someone that doesn't know you well and see what impression they get of you based on the personal statement.
  - Be receptive of the feedback of others, as it is difficult to be objective about your personal statement because it's about your life!



# BIG PICTURE: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The best part of the personal statement is that there is no right way to create a successful essay.

Be creative, yet insightful and intellectual with the writing process and work towards developing a strong positive image of yourself through your writing.

Start the process early to give yourself time to refine the personal statement and get help from others.

Have fun with the writing process, as this is a unique opportunity for personal reflection and getting to know yourself at a deeper level.