

THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

A guide to what the college application consists of and brainstorming ideas for the personal essay component of the college application.

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As junior year comes to an end, college application season soon begins for the new seniors. **The main focus of your senior year will revolve around college**; applying to colleges and waiting to hear back on admissions. Many students will wait until the last minute to begin their applications, but some choose to get a head start and the summer is the perfect opportunity to begin getting ready for your applications.

The College Application Breakdown:

❖ **Basic Information:**

This portion of the application requires general information about the applicant. The college wants to know your information such as your name, ethnicity, address, contact information (phone and email), citizenship, your birthdate and where you were born. You also have to include your academic information such as your current school, your anticipated graduation date and the extracurriculars you've taken part in throughout your high school journey.

❖ **Application Fee:**

Depending on how you choose to apply, you may have to pay an application fee. Many colleges use a platform known as the Common Application which is a standard form and you can apply to many colleges using this one application so you won't have to fill out multiple applications. Fees may be \$35-\$70, however you may qualify for a fee waiver.

❖ **Test Scores:**

Test scores are very crucial in the application, however, due to COVID-19 many schools have gone test optional for the Class of 2021. You should submit your scores if they are similar to the ones of admitted students at the school you wish to apply to. You are not obligated to submit scores this application cycle.

❖ ***Transcripts:***

You are required to submit your most recent High School Transcripts in your college application. Colleges want to see growth, and how rigorous the course load was for the student. AP classes, College Now, Stem Research, and IB classes all add to your application because they show that the student is able to strive in an advanced level class and can handle coursework similar to that in college. If you live in NYS and take Regents, don't fret over low scores on these exams, colleges typically overlook regents since most states don't have these exams.

❖ ***Recommendation Letters:***

Typically you are required to submit two letters of recommendation from your teachers and one from your guidance counselor. Selective schools may ask for a personal letter of recommendation and this may be from a friend, a family member or someone else you may know personally. The recommendation letters should be from teachers that know you well-not necessarily the ones you received high marks for the class. Make sure to ask your teachers and guidance counselor in advance because they write many letters of recommendation and you don't want a rushed evaluation!

❖ ***Auditions/Portfolios:***

If your academic interests are the arts or music and dance, then you may have to submit a portfolio and attend an audition where alumnus and teachers will evaluate you on your talents. Schools will provide more information on auditions dates and how to submit your portfolio.

❖ ***Interviews:***

Interviews are with alumni in your area or at the school with a staff member and they are given to get a better understanding of who the student really is. They

don't necessarily mean you are admitted, but you should come prepared to answer questions on the spot and about yourself. Schools will notify you if they would like for you to be interviewed.

❖ **Supplements:**

Supplement Essays are school specific. There are word limits on supplements, and these word counts vary based on the question and the college. Some of these questions similarly ask the same thing, however the answers for one school should not be able to be substituted for another school. You should be school specific on your answers and have a teacher or a friend double check your answers.

❖ **Personal Essay (College Essay):**

The Personal Essay (also known as the College Essay) is the 650 word essay that is solemnly about the student. This essay gives insight on who the student really is. It can be about almost anything, but it must reflect the student as a person.

Here are the Common Application prompts for the 2020-2021 applicants:

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma — anything of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. 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.

(<https://www.commonapp.org/apply/essay-prompts>)

These are this year's options and you only need to answer one prompt.

Remember the word limit is 650 word

Here are some brainstorming ideas and writing tips that may help you:

- What inspires you?
- What have you done during your high school years and how have you helped out in your community? (Don't over highlight your achievements! You may appear egotistical).
- Is there someone in your life who's helped guide you? That you look up to and has possibly changed your perspectives?
- What are you passionate about?
- A trip or change that's shaped you?
- Please don't talk about political matters, they may be offensive to others (those reading your essay).
- Please don't talk about religion as it may offend the reader.
- Anything that may be of significance to you; it could be an object, a phrase or hobby.
- Don't worry about the word count, instead use the space and get your rough draft together before worrying about the limit and then work on shortening your story.

Many students will talk about a trauma, family death, divorced parent, sports or being a part of an immigrant family. Although these are important and very significant in a person's life, college admissions officers have and will be reading many of these types of essays. So if you are going to talk about these situations, make sure it's specific to you only. (You can put a creative spin on it so that they remember your essay.)

- Your essay should pull together your application by highlighting the kind of person you are. **Remember colleges want to see your authentic self throughout your essay.**
- Make sure to get multiple people to read and critique your writing!
- You will go through many drafts before your final piece.

Best of luck on your applications!

