Your College Admissions Essay

A Presentation Prepared For

- Santa Clara County Library District
- Saratoga High School
- City of Palo Alto
Overview

- Overview of applications
- Essays: What to expect
- Writing Tips
- Staying Organized
- Have Fun :)

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How Many Essays?

**CSU and Community Colleges**
No essays

**UC**
2 Personal Statements (1000 words total)
1 Additional Statement (Optional)*

**Common Application**
1 Personal Statement (650 words)
1 Additional Statement (Optional)*
2-4 Short Supplement Essays per college

**Non Common App or Out of State (MIT, Tulane)**
1 Longer Personal Statement (500-650 words)
**AND/OR**
2-4 Short Supplement Essays per college
1 Additional Statement (Optional)*
UC Application

UC application released Aug. 1st
Applications due Nov. 30th/Apply before Nov. 25th!

UC Personal Statement Prompts (1000 words total)

#1. Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

#2. Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?
The Common Application

Released Aug. 1st. Deadlines vary.
650 word limit. Choose one of the following:

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it.

2. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

3. Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?

4. Describe a problem you’ve solved or a problem you’d like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

5. Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.
Supplements--The Essays

Supplement Prompts (Also used by State-Out-of-State Universities)
Length: 100 - 500 words

- How will you contribute to diversity on our campus? (state schools, Tulane)
- Elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities. (Duke, USC, UMich)
- Why are you applying to our college? (Tufts, LMU, Brown, BU)
- Describe your academic interests. How will you pursue them? (Purdue)
- Please describe an unusual way in which you have fun. (CalTech)
- If you had 5K, how would you use it to design your own project? (Elon)
- “Art is either plagiarism or revolution.” –Paul Gauguin. What is your “art”? Is it plagiarism or revolution? (University of Chicago)
Tips

Your essay is not outside of you.

- Avoid generic topics or stories. Explore with great details the experiences and qualities that define you.
- When do you bump up against yourself? (limitations, zone of genius)
- Tell a story. Start by telling your story out loud. Have someone else write it down.
- Be concise. Your poetry emerges through your choice of words.
- Writing is communication. What do you want your readers to feel? Avoid negativity.
- Voice and truth are supreme; don’t lose your story of who you are to the style or language of your writing. Balance creativity with insight.

“Working during a strong mood (especially a positive mood) will result in more novel ideas.”

Gregory Ciotti
Senior Fall Deadlines

September: Finalize personal statements, additional statement, counselor recommendation form (Green Sheet)

Submit any rolling applications. See out-of-state state colleges. UofO, UW

October 20th: Submit CSU applications.


November 20th: Submit UC applications.

December 15th: Submit regular decision essays and applications.

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Stay Organized - Keep Inspired

Organization - Use what works for you

- Google Docs
- Personal Statements: UCs/.Common App
- Supplement Statements
- Multiple Files vs 1 File
- College List--Excel Example
- Task List--My Example

Inspiration

- Find a buddy to keep you on track.
- Quit your desk.
- Refresh with your favorites: snacks, music, quotes, visuals.
Thank you!

- Next essay writing workshop: Friday, September 4th!
- I run workshops through summer and fall
- 15 years of college teaching and advising
- Deep listener
- Connects easily with all kinds of students
- Background in creative and expository writing
- Consulting tailored to personality and time limitations
- Knowledge expertise on academic trends shaping admissions and campuses
In what context is your essay evaluated?

1. In comparison to the writing sections of your ACT &/or SAT.
2. Within the context of your writing intensive courses and extracurriculars.
3. In comparison to your supplement essays.

Continuity and coherence are of utmost importance. If a reader feels that you did not write your essay or that you had too much help with your essay, then your application may be rejected.