

Strut Your Strengths

WRITING A GREAT ESSAY

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- The essay is your introduction to the college admissions team
- It aids reviewer with how to review your application
- To highlight and/or identify defining experiences in your life
- Offers you the opportunity to tell your story
 - Family circumstances
 - Challenges or unusual circumstances
 - Call attention to your file like: just moved to the school high school, English is your second language and it is not spoken at home, may not have internet at home and limited to school, library or café access.

The Purpose

- Learn family history
- Identify your qualities
- Show personal growth and maturity
- Be insightful about the lessons you have learned

Preparation

- Family related issues can make wonderful essay topics. Here are some questions to start you thinking about your family life and how it has shaped you. These questions can trigger some terrific ideas to develop in your personal essay.
- Many colleges would like to know about the non-credit programs you may have participated in, such as: summer music programs, sports camps, language programs, art or travel-study programs. These questions can trigger some ideas.
- Extracurricular activities can tell admissions officials how you spend some of your time when you are not in class. Think about your extracurricular, community, religious, and family activities that make a positive statement about you.

Points of Interest

- Your work experience can also tell admissions officials about the type of person you are. These questions will help to trigger some ideas for you.
- Your college and career plans can show admissions committees that you have a sense of where you are going. These questions may trigger some thoughts about your future.

Points of Interest

- 1. If your essay is not due for weeks or months, start a journal today! Record whatever catches your eye. Your honest images and thoughts may lead to a rich variety of ideas.
- 2. Try free-writing. That is, write nonstop for ten to fifteen minutes a day, paying no attention to grammar, spelling, or punctuation. You'll be amazed at how rapidly your ideas flow when you write without preplanning.
- 3. Focus your free-writing. Once you have done some free-writing, reread what you've written. Circle any idea or phrase you like or that holds promise for an essay topic.

Thinking Of Ideas to Write About

- 4. Write down a list of items, like influential people in your life or books that you've read recently. A list of items may bring to mind just the topic you're looking for.
- 5. Create a time line of your life. Write down every event you can think of, whether you think it's important or not. A glance at your final list may turn up a variety of essay topics.

Thinking Of Ideas to Write About

1. Start with an incident, real, or invented, that leads the reader gracefully to the point of your essay.
2. State a provocative idea in an ordinary way or an ordinary idea in a provocative way.
3. Use a quotation (not necessarily a famous one). Make sure it relates to the topic of your essay.
4. Knock down a commonly held assumption or define a word in a new and surprising way.
5. Ask an interesting question or two, which you will answer in your essay.
6. Tell a story. A narrative is a good way to begin your essay because it creates suspense.
7. Make a reference to a familiar or special occasion.

Great Beginnings

You will want to make sure your conclusion makes a positive impression. With a good ending, you can summarize your essay, tie in new ideas, and provide a lasting impact that people won't forget. Three of the most effective ways to consolidate your ideas and provide a note of finality are:

- 1. Summary
- 2. A summary plus look into the future
- 3. A further implication of the essay idea

Great Endings

1. **Answer the Question.** You can follow these next 13 steps, but if you miss the question, you will not be admitted to any institution.
2. **Be Original.** Even seemingly boring topics can sound interesting if creatively approached.
3. **Be Yourself.** Admissions officers want to learn about you and your writing ability. Write about something meaningful and describe your feelings, not necessarily your actions.
4. **Don't "Treasuries" your Composition.** Big words are fine, but only if they are used in the appropriate contexts with complex styles.
5. **Use Imagery and Clear, Vivid Prose.** Appeal to the five senses of the admissions officers.

TIPS FOR WRITING

6. **Spend the Most Time on your Introduction.** Expect admissions officers to spend 1-2 minutes reading your essay. Use your introduction to grab their interest.
 - ➔ **Don't Summarize in your Introduction.** Ask yourself why a reader would want to read your entire essay after reading your introduction. If you summarize, the admissions officer need not read the rest of your essay.
 - ➔ **Create Mystery or Intrigue in your Introduction.** Raise questions in the minds of the admissions officers to force them to read on. Appeal to their emotions to make them relate to your subject matter.
7. **Body Paragraphs Must Relate to Introduction.** Your introduction can be original, but cannot be silly. The paragraphs that follow must relate to your introduction.
8. **Use Transition.** Transition includes repeating key words and progression the idea. Transition provides the intellectual architecture to argument building.
9. **Prove It.** Develop your main idea with vivid and specific facts, events, quotations, examples, and reason. There is a big difference between simply stating a point of view and letting an idea unfold in the details.

TIPS FOR WRITING CONT.

10. **Conclusions are Crucial.** The conclusion is your last chance to persuade the reader or impress upon them your qualifications. The reader should not need to be reminded of what you wrote 300 words before. Consider the following conclusions:

- ➡ Expand upon the broader implications of your discussion.
- ➡ Consider linking your conclusion to your introduction to establish a sense of balance by reiterating introductory phrases.
- ➡ Redefine a term used previously in your body paragraphs.
- ➡ End with a famous quote that is relevant to your argument. Do not try to do this, as this approach is overdone. This should come naturally.
- ➡ Frame your discussion within a larger context or show that your topic has widespread appeal.
- ➡ Remember, your essay need not be so tidy that you can answer why your little sister died or why people starve in Africa; you are not writing a “sit-com,” but should forge some attempt at closure.

TIPS FOR WRITING CONT.

11. **Do Something Else.** Spend a week or so away from your draft to decide if you still consider your topic and approach worthwhile.

12. **Give your Draft to Others.** Ask editors to read with these questions in mind:

- ➔ What is the essay about?
- ➔ Have I used active voice verbs wherever possible?
- ➔ Is my sentence structure varied or do I use all long or all short sentences?
- ➔ Do you detect any clichés?
- ➔ Do I use transition appropriately?
- ➔ Do I use imagery often and does this make the essay clearer and more vivid?
- ➔ What about this essay is memorable?
- ➔ What's the worst part of the essay?
- ➔ What parts of the essay need elaboration or are unclear?
- ➔ What parts of the essay do not support your main argument or are immaterial to your case?
- ➔ Is every single sentence crucial to the essay? This **MUST** be the case.
- ➔ What does the essay reveal about your personality?
- ➔ Could anyone else have written this essay?
- ➔ How would you fill in the following blank on the essay: "I want to accept you to this college because our college needs more _____."

TIPS FOR WRITING CONT.

13. **Revise, Revise, Revise.** You only are allowed so many words; use them wisely. Do you use transition? Are you introduction and conclusions more than summaries? Did you find every single grammatical error?

- ➡ Allow for the evolution on your main topic. Do not assume your subject must remain fixed and that you can only tweak sentences.
- ➡ Editing takes time. Consider reordering your supporting details, delete irrelevant sections, and make clear the broader implications of your experiences. Allow your more important arguments to come to the foreground. Take points that might only be implicit and make them implicit.

TIPS FOR WRITING CONT.

ApplyTexas Essay Prompts A, B and C

For U.S. Freshman and International Freshman Applications

Slated to replace current ApplyTexas essay choices A, B and C

For inclusion in ApplyTexas applications for the 2019-2020 cycle (Summer 2019, Fall 2019, and Spring 2020 - opening 8/1/2018)

- **Essay A:** What was the environment in which you were raised? Describe your family, home, neighborhood, or community, and explain how it has shaped you as a person.
- **Essay B:** Some students have an identity, an interest, or a talent that defines them in an essential way. If you are one of these students, then tell us about yourself.
- **Essay C:** You've got a ticket in your hand – Where will you go? What will you do? What will happen when you get there?

ApplyTexas Prompts

Short Answer 1: Career Plans

- **If you could have any career, what would it be? Why? Describe any activities you are involved in, life experiences you've had, or even classes you've taken that have helped you identify this professional path.**
- **Tips to consider:** This is an opportunity to describe your academic and future professional interests. You may not yet be 100% certain about what you want to do, but is there a particular field that you think you want to work in, or a certain path you want to pursue after college? How have your interests and experiences influenced your choice of majors or your plans to explore in college?

Univ. of Texas: Career

Short Answer 2: Academics

- **Do you believe your academic record (transcript information and test scores) provide an accurate representation of you as a student? Why or why not?**
- **Tips to consider:** Feel free to address anything you want the Office of Admissions to know about your academic record so that we can consider this information when we review your application. You can discuss your academic work, class rank, GPA, individual course grades, test scores, and/or the classes that you took or the classes that were available to you. You can also describe how special circumstances and/or your school, community, and family environments impacted your high school performance.

Univ. of Texas: Academics

Short Answer 3: Leadership

- **How do you show leadership in your life? How do you see yourself being a leader at UT Austin?**
- **Tips to consider:** Leadership can be demonstrated by positions you hold as an officer in a club or organization, but other types of leadership are important too. Leaders can emerge in various situations at any given time, including outside of the school experience. Please share a brief description of the type of leadership qualities you possess, from school and non-school related experiences, including demonstrations of leadership in your job, your community, or within your family responsibilities, and then share how you hope to demonstrate leadership as a member of our campus community.

Univ. of Texas: Leadership



Thank you for
attending!
