



# How to Write an AWESOME Personal Statement/Essay





# Rainbows or Evidence?



## What is the **US** looking for?

- Grades
- Test Scores
- Multiple Essays (some schools have additional supplementary essays & prompts)
- Teacher Recommendations (1 or 2)
- Extracurricular Activities
- Leadership
- Character, Citizenship
- Ability to pay
- Legacy
- Gender
- Athletic ability/special talent

## What is the **UK** looking for?

- Predicted Grades
- School Reference Letter (written by your advisor)
- Personal Statement
- Testing (IELTS)



# UK Personal Statement



- A student's opportunity to:
  - Tell you universities **WHY** you should be **SELECTED**
  - Answer the question: 'why do you want to **study** this course?'
  - Demonstrate your **enthusiasm** and **commitment**
  - Show how your **experience** and **skills** prepare you for the course – evidence!

*Goal is to sell yourself to the school*



# UK Personal Statement

## *Need to Know*



- Must write **ONE** personal statement that will be seen by all 5 UK universities
  - Therefore, you must *avoid* applying to a diverse range of courses
  - Do **NOT** mention any university by name
  - Joint degrees - address both aspects of the course



# What does a Personal Statement Include? The 80/20 Approach



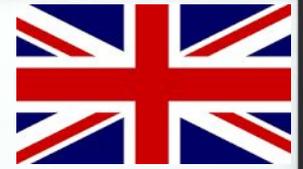
**80%**

*Why are you applying to the course you've chosen and why you are well-suited to it?*

- + Why does the subject interest you
- + Show you understand what is required for the course
- + Explain the skills/ experience that will make you successful in the course
- + So...
  - + Make links to academic subjects (content)
  - + Talk about your EE/outside reading
  - + Super-curricular Activities (ECA, trips, lectures relevant to course, work experience, job shadowing)
  - + Research into the course/career



# What does a Personal Statement Include? The 80/20 Approach



**20%**

*What else will you bring to the university?*

- + Give evidence of your engagement, motivation, and spare capacity
- + Sport, music, drama, art
- + Achievements and awards
- + Service, volunteering, community contribution,
- + **Reflect**, don't list!



# What does a Personal Statement Include? The 80/20 Approach



## + Example for **Business & Management**:

Working on case studies in my Business and Marketing class had led me to analyze the business cycle and how major corporations such as Coca Cola, Pepsi, and Nike sustain major profitability.

## + Example for **Biochemistry**:

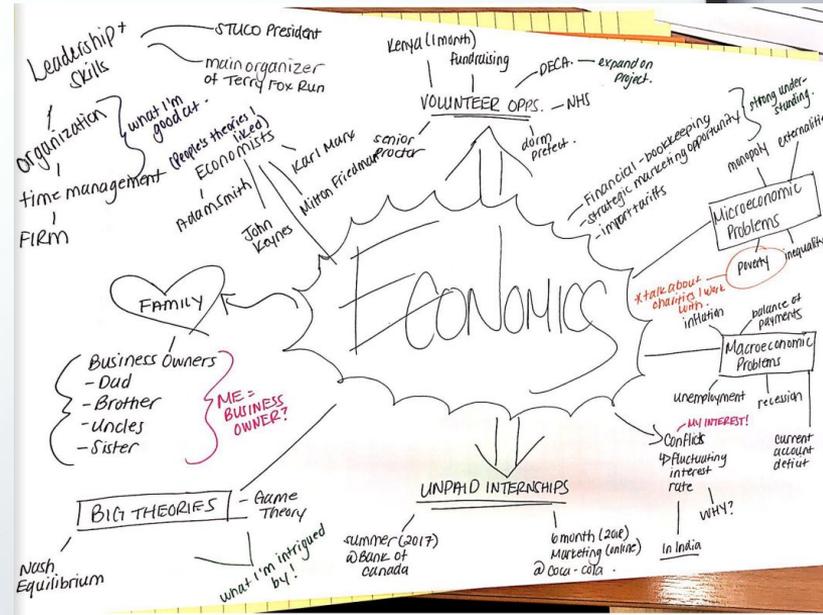
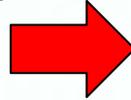
I developed a keen interest in an organism's ability to survive. I am specifically intrigued by how organisms evolve and develop capabilities that adapt to their surroundings, in order to stay alive.

You would relate this content to the program you are applying to, projects/research you have conducted to specifically address your interests (survival of organisms/profitability), skills/qualities that you have that would make you successful in the program.

# AH! Where do I start?



- + Create a mindmap of all of your ideas
- + Look at the university websites and entry profiles for your chosen courses
  - + They will often tell you what they are look for (qualities and criteria of what they want their students to demonstrate)
  - + Use the Personal Statement template to help you start brainstorming



# Format, Size, & Presentation



- + 47 lines of text (including blank lines)
  - + OR 4,000 characters
  - + Usually whatever comes first
- + Break your statement into paragraphs
- + Do not use **bold**, *italics*, or underlining
- + Prepare in a **Google Doc** (so we can edit, and you can re-draft)
- + Single Spaced
- + No *fancy fonts*
  - + Make sure it looks polished and professional, it's for your future
  - + Suggestions: Arial, Times New Roman (12 point).





# DIFFERENT TYPES OF U.S. STYLE ESSAYS



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# Different Types of Essays



## Personal Essay

- + Common Application
- + Coalition Application
- + Individual School Application
- + WHO ARE YOU?

## Supplemental Essay

- + Mutual fit with an institution
- + Why us, *specifically?*
- + Share creative/intellectual passions

## School Specific-Essays

- + Example: University of California



# Who is your AUDIENCE?



**Admissions  
Officer**

**Member of  
the  
Admissions  
Committee**

**Outside  
Readers**

**Faculty/  
Academic  
Deans**





# Examples of Common App Prompts & Supplementary Prompts



# 2019–2020 Common App Essay Prompts



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 would 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.



# 2019–2020 Common App Essay Prompts



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.



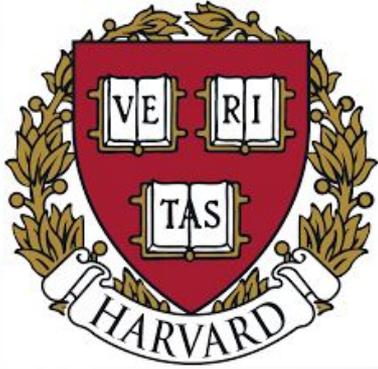
# Examples of Supplemental Essay Prompts



WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR INTEREST IN NYU. WE ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO APPLY TO NYU AND MORE SPECIFICALLY, WHY YOU HAVE 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 TELL US WHY YOU ARE INTERESTED IN EACH OF THE CAMPUSES, SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, OR PROGRAMS TO WHICH YOU HAVE APPLIED. YOU MAY BE FOCUSED OR UNDECIDED, OR SIMPLY OPEN TO THE OPTIONS WITHIN NYU'S GLOBAL NETWORK; REGARDLESS, WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND - WHY NYU? (400 WORD MAXIMUM)



# Examples of Supplemental Essay Prompts



*Your intellectual life may extend beyond the academic requirements of your particular school. Please use the space below to list additional intellectual activities that you have not mentioned or detailed elsewhere in your application. These could include, but are not limited to, supervised or self-directed projects not done as school work, training experiences, online courses not run by your school, or summer academic or research programs not described elsewhere. (Optional – 150 words)*



# Examples of Supplemental Essay Prompts



Please explain your interest in the major (s) you selected.  
(200 or fewer)

There are thousands of universities and colleges. Please share with us why you are interested in attending Chapman (200 or fewer)

*(Additional Prompts)*





THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO

## Examples of Supplemental Essay Prompts with Choices



How does the University of Chicago, as you know it now, satisfy your desire for a particular kind of learning, community, and future? Please address with some specificity your own wishes and how they relate to UChicago.

Cats have nine lives, Pac-Man has 3 lives, and radioactive isotopes have half-lives. How many lives does something else—conceptual or actual—have, and why?

If there's a limited amount of matter in the universe, how can Olive Garden (along with other restaurants and their concepts of food infinity) offer truly unlimited soup, salad, and breadsticks? Explain this using any method of analysis you wish—physics, biology, economics, history, theology... the options, as you can tell, are endless.

A hot dog might be a sandwich, and cereal might be a soup, but is a \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_?

“Fiction reveals truth that reality obscures.”



# Size & Presentation for Common App



- + **250-650** words
  - + Universities will have specific word count so make sure you research this
- + Supplemental Essays: follow word count
- + Prepare in **Google Docs** (when finalized, copy and paste into application portal)
- + Edit your essay well, no room for *careless mistakes*



# How are Essays Used?



## SHARING YOUR VOICE

- + Tell them about the person behind the transcripts and activities
- + Express qualities/experiences not apparent elsewhere in the application

## SHOWING OFF YOUR WRITING

- + Technical quality of writing & English
- + Depth & maturity of thought
- + Readiness for university-level assignments

## ASSESSING “FIT”

- + You're great - BUT are you great for NYU?



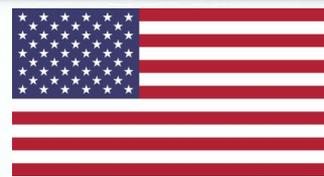
# Essay Writing Tips



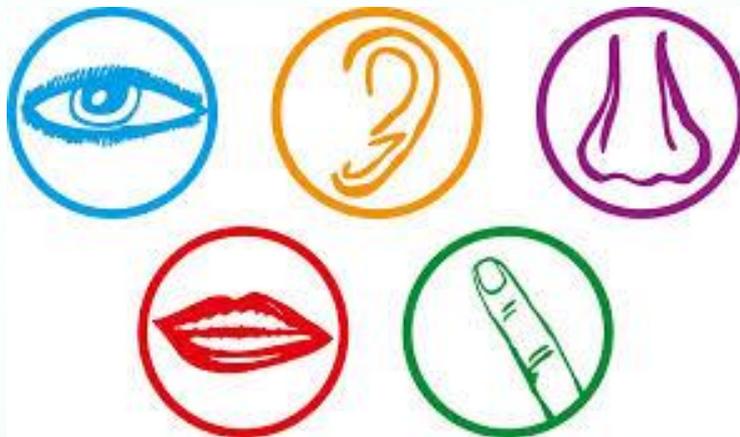
- + Respond to the prompt AND follow up question
  - + *Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. **What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?***
- + Know your audience
  - + Common App essay to 10 schools? Or supplement to one?
- + Use essays to add NEW info to your story
- + Write clearly, write succinctly, let your voice come through
- + Pull me in from your first sentence!
- + For school - specific supplements, do the College Swap test



# Essay Writing Tips



- + Use all 5 senses



- + Essays are a window into how you think, what you value, and how you see the world



# Essay Advice from Admissions Officers



- + “You can be president of a society and you can do nothing. It’s not about titles but about how you engage with your community”
- + “You can ask someone to help you edit but don’t let your dad use that red pen on your essay. I can tell when a 51 year old businessman has worked too hard on a 17 year old’s essay”





**Our Advice**

**TAKE IT**

# OUR ADVICE – TAKE IT!

- + Before sharing your drafts with us...
  - + Read it **outloud**
  - + Proofread and edit accordingly
  - + **Ask** another friend & teacher to look at it
  
- + When your advisor edits your essay and provides you feedback, **make** the appropriate changes
  - + Confused with it? Lost? Don't know what to do with the feedback? **ASK US!**

**ALWAYS REVIEW WITH YOUR ADVISOR BEFORE SUBMITTING**

# Do's & Don'ts

## Do!

- + Write your own personal statement (UCAS uses similarity-detection software)
- + Use first person ("I")
- + Expect to make *several* drafts
- + PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD

## Don't

- + Leave it until the last minute
- + Use humour
- + Use something that goes against the value of the institution
- + Talk about another school
- + Share your life history
- + Use inspiration quotes
- + Use words that you don't know how to use properly in a sentence (a.k.a. Using the thesaurus)
- + Don't lie



**What helps your  
lovely University  
Advisors?**



# What WE Want!

- + Stay **organized**
- + You to do **research** ahead of time and make a calendar for all **deadlines** (applications & scholarship essays)
- + Create **rough drafts**
- + Consider **our feedback**
- + Make changes with the feedback in mind (don't **ignore** it)
- + Realize it is a **work in progress** (you will be making multiple drafts)

