

Uncommon Essay Prompts (yes, these were real essay questions):

How do you feel about Wednesday? [University of Chicago]

Are we alone? [Tufts University]

If any of these three inanimate objects could talk, how would your room, computer or car describe you? [Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley]

Can a toad hear? Prove it. [Bennington College]

Sartre said, “Hell is other people”; but Streisand sang, “People who need people / Are the luckiest people in the world.” With whom do you agree and why? Don’t be icky. [Amherst College]

You’ve just reached your one millionth hit on your YouTube video. What is the video about? *(Lehigh)*

Winston Churchill believed ‘a joke is a very serious thing.’ Tell us your favorite joke and try to explain the joke without ruining it. *(University of Chicago)*

What’s your favorite word and why? *(University of Virginia)*

Some say social media is superficial, with no room for expressing deep or complex ideas. We challenge you to defy these skeptics by describing yourself as fully and accurately as possible in the 140-character limit of a tweet. *(Wake Forest University)*

So where is Waldo, really? *(University of Chicago)*

How did you get caught? (Or not caught, as the case may be.) *(University of Chicago)*

Prepare a one-minute video that says something about you. Upload it to an easily accessible Web site and give us the URL and access code. What you do or say is totally up to you. [Tufts University]

Find x. *(University of Chicago)*

What’s the take-away from all this? Answer: the process of reading essays can be painfully monotonous (and subsequently boring), and admissions counselors are always seeking something interesting in the essay that forces a candidate to reveal themselves and perhaps write about something that’s a little uncomfortable and a little creative.

Keep in mind; these topics are coming from some selective and highly selective universities. You can contrast this with other colleges and universities who will put little stock in the essay. Ultimately, you need to know what the colleges you are applying to want before you begin.