

Narrative Writing

College Essay Prep

The purpose of these writings is to explore ideas that are common in admission and scholarship essays. Most of the topics below are from actual admission or scholarship essay topics. While most essays would be much longer than you are asked to explore here, your purpose should be to get some ideas on paper that you can pull from later. Your writing should be free from careless errors and have clarity.

Keep a copy of your writings somewhere that you can access it. You do not want the copy you submit to be your only copy.

There are two aspects to try to capture in each writing. Who are you? Can you communicate?

Answer at least ten of the prompts below. Each of the explorations should be at least 150 words in length.

1. List and explain five things that scare you.
2. If you were to write your autobiography today, what are five events that would be included?
3. Interview your parent(s) and ask them if they were to write your biography today, what are five events they would include.
4. Ask three family members and three friends to give three adjectives to describe you. Record the adjectives they use and muse on why you think they used those adjectives.
5. Describe a moment that changed you.
6. List and explain five of your favorite things. List and explain five of your least favorite things.
7. Recount a time you felt challenged. How did the challenge impact you?
8. Recount a time you faced a failure or a setback. How did you react?
9. Explain a belief you have challenged.
10. Discuss a problem you would like to solve.
11. If money is no consideration, what would you like to do in life?
12. At what point in your life do you think you have grown the most so far?
13. If you could talk to your past self, what is one piece of advice you would give yourself the day before you start high school?
14. What is something that captivates you?
15. Share a picture that shows a key aspect of who you are and explain.
16. History has recorded the American Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the Sexual Revolution. Today we are witnessing a revolution in the way we share information. What do you think will be the next great revolution, and what will be its impact on you and your society?
17. Explain something of significance you have undertaken or done on your own within the last two years that has nothing to do with activities connected to school.
18. Explain some good advice you were given and your reaction to it.
19. Explain a criticism you have received and your reaction to it.
20. Select a creative work—a novel, a film, a poem, a musical piece, a painting or other work of art—that has influenced the way you view the world and the way you view yourself. Discuss the work and its effect on you.
21. Describe an intellectual experience of the past two years that has given you great satisfaction.
22. Tell us about the town(s)/city(ies)/neighborhood(s) where you have grown up and how it (they) has/have shaped who you are.

23. You have just finished your 300-page autobiography. Share page two-hundred and seventeen.
24. What invention would the world be better off without?
25. What is responsibility?
26. Are you more alike or different from those around you?
27. If you can spend tomorrow doing exactly what you want to do, what would your day look like?
28. If we were to ignore test scores and academic achievement, what one thing about yourself would you highlight to help explain who you are?
29. If “you are what you eat,” tell us about a food or foods you have eaten that helps to explain who you are.
30. Certain things—songs, household objects, familiar smells—bring us instantly back to some past moment in our lives. Write about one of those things.
31. Community service is valuable. If you were to devote one year of service to a volunteer project, what would it be, and what would you hope to accomplish?
32. What quality do you like best in yourself and what do you like least? What quality would you most like to see flourish and which would you like to see wither?
33. Think of a test or event that you went into unprepared. Why weren’t you prepared, and how did you deal with it?
34. Describe a lightbulb moment when you finally understood something that had been difficult for you to grasp. It could be an idea, a problem, a skill, a concept, or something else. Describe your path to understanding and how that impacted you.
35. Explain a vivid event from your life and explain how it has shaped who you are.
36. Tell of a time you finally achieved a personal goal.
37. Tell of an event in your life that initially seemed bad but turned out to be good.
38. Teaching someone else how to do something can be rewarding. Tell about a time you taught someone something.
39. Places have meaning. Describe a place that has or had meaning to you and how that place helps to explain something about you.
40. Describe a personal ritual that you, your friends, or your family have. Narrate the ritual so that we can better understand who you are.
41. Tell about a time you had to gather courage to stand up for something. Narrate the event to show why you made the decision, how you gathered courage, and how the decision impacted you.
42. Tell of a time you disagreed with a decision that had been made that impacted you. How did you respond?
43. Describe a teacher, relative or friend you will never forget. You decide what is most important to know about this person. What is important about the person’s image? Was the sound of his or her voice memorable for any reason? How did the voice make you feel? How did you feel when you were around this person? Did he or she make you a better or worse person? Why?
44. Describe the person you are now then describe the person you want to be in ten years.
45. How do you deal with anxiety and worry?
46. Describe a routine you have.
47. Tell about an invention that you do not currently know exists that you wish did exist.