



Application Essays

Writing Essays for College
Admissions

Introduction- Who are our panelists?

English Department:

Mrs. Kucaj and Mr. Mahoney

College Admissions Representative:

Ms. Rachel Boyle, Boston University

WA Counseling Department:

Mrs. Hider and Mrs. Lynch



What are we going to cover today?

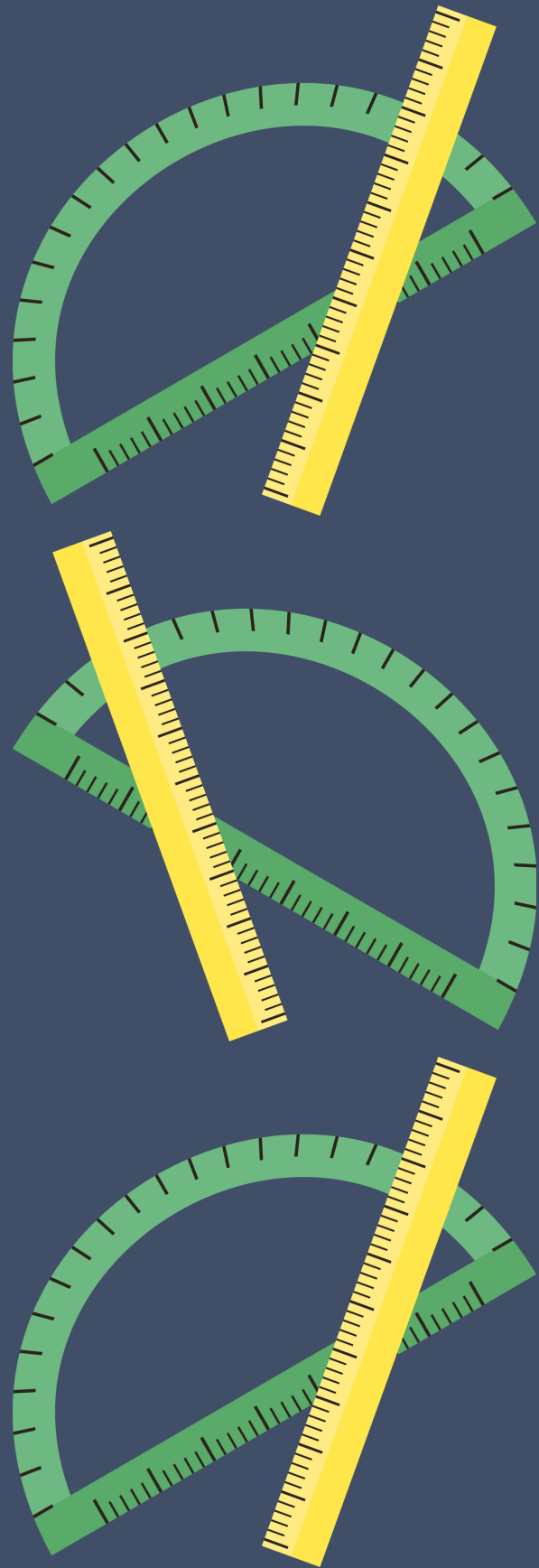
Writing an effective admissions essay begins with understanding why you are being asked to write this essay! We're going to discuss the following topics today:

**Common
Application
prompts and
parameters**

**Non- Common
Application
essays**

**Supplemental
Essays**

**Questions about
the essay
process and
advice**



The Common Application Essay

The Common Application essay is a personal statement required by many colleges, allowing students to showcase their unique experiences, values, and personality beyond grades and test scores.

- Allows you the opportunity to share more about yourself apart from your grades, activities and test scores (if applicable)
- A chance to reveal who you are and what matters to you
- Between 250-650 words

The Common Application Essay Prompts

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then 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. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?

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 that 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



**Questions
with our
panelists**

Summary of discussion

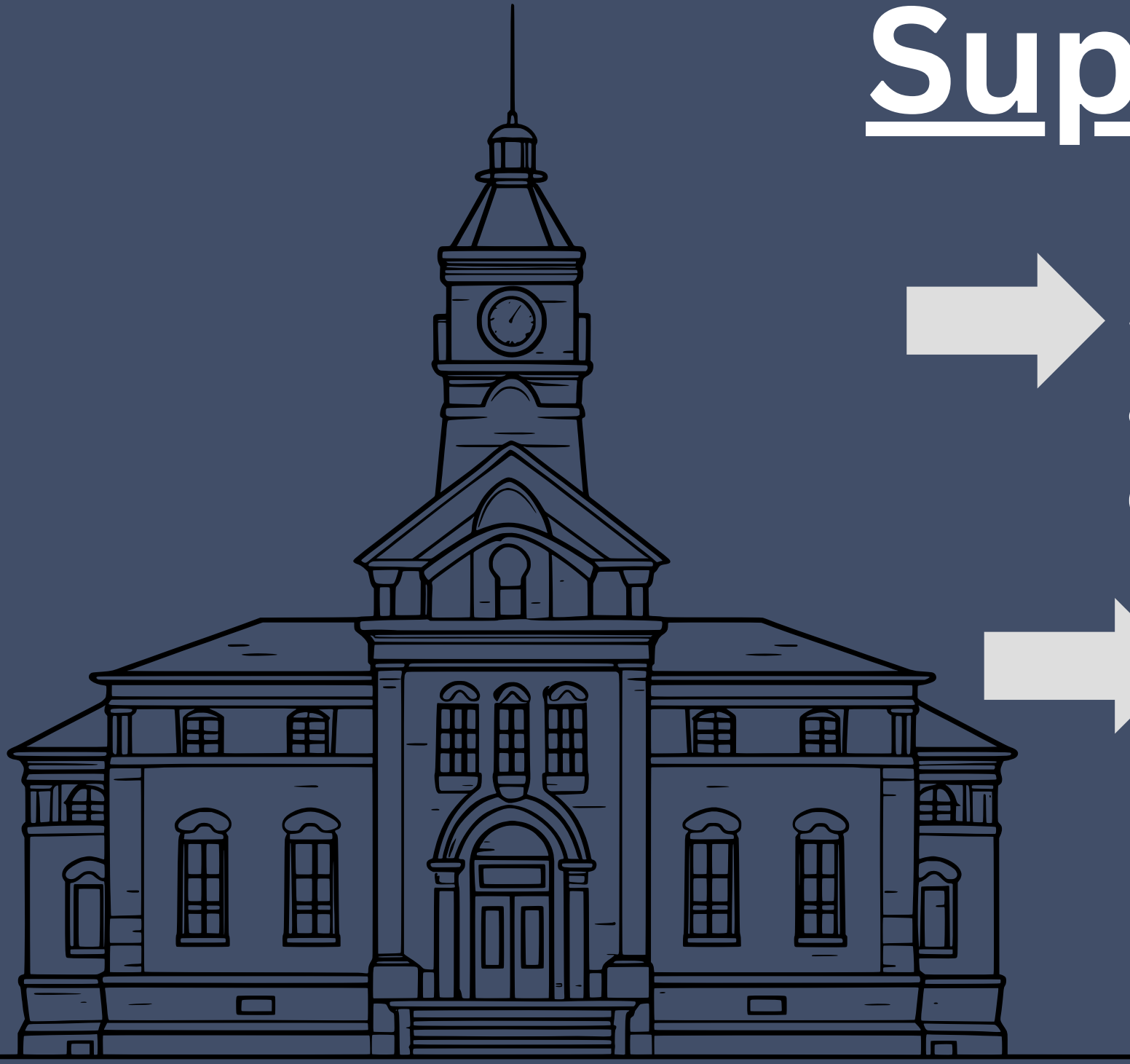
- Avoid cliché topics (sports injury, mission trip, etc). If you write about a grandparent, make sure in the end, the reader learns more about you than the grandparent.
- Can you start in the middle of the story? This is a great example of a solid “hook” for the reader.
- Colleges can tell when too many people have edited your essay. They can also tell when you use a thesaurus or AI.
- When you’ve finished your essay, ask yourself:
 - 1-what are you proud of in your essay?
 - 2-what did you do best in the essay?
 - 3-what do you want the person reading this to know about you? (what three words would they use to describe you)?
- Don’t add in details that didn’t happen to make the story seem more exciting (think of Mr. Mahoney and the deer!).
- Remember to be genuine (for example, don’t try to be funny if you are usually pretty serious)
- Colleges don’t care which prompt you choose and don’t prefer a specific prompt.
- Memorable essays aren’t grandiose! Remember- you are only 17 or 18 years old.
- Don’t use your essay as therapy. If you haven’t worked through an issue, don’t use the college essay to do that
- This is a personal essay; writing it can make you feel vulnerable.
- This is NOT a repetition of your resume.
- If you google what to write to get into school XYZ, remember that the people writing that aren’t admissions officers.



Supplemental Essays

A supplemental essay is targeted to one college, while the Common App personal statement essay accompanies your Common Application, which can go to multiple colleges of your choice. Supplemental essays are usually more specific and designed to showcase your fit with the college.

Supplemental Essays



Supplemental essays are often college-specific and require you to address particular questions or prompts related to that institution.



Colleges may use them to distinguish between similarly-qualified applicants. When two students have nearly identical GPAs, test scores, and activities, the supplementals can help with the decision.

What are examples of supplemental questions?

Supplemental essay questions will be updated in the Common App after August 1.

Why (name of college)?

Why did you select the major that you did?

UVM is a community that celebrates the unique identity of every student, faculty and staff member. Tell us how your identities have shaped the ways you interact with the world. *UVM*

Name three songs from your perfect playlist.
We look forward to creating a Spotify playlist from your answers.

Elon University

The penny is on its way out—too small to matter, too costly to keep. But not everything small should disappear. What's one object the world is phasing out that you think we can't afford to lose, and why? – *Ella Somaiya, Class of 2028, U*

Chicago

Reflect on a social or community issue that deeply resonates with you. Why is it important to you, and how have you been involved in addressing or raising awareness about it?

Boston University



**Questions
with our
panelists**

Avoid Supplemental Essay Mistakes

There are several common mistakes that students make when writing application essays. Here are a few mistakes you will want to avoid:

Ignoring the prompt

Being too generic-
particularly on the “Why
our college” prompt

Using the wrong college
name in the supplement

Not sounding like
yourself

Repeating your resume

Forgetting to proofread

Final Notes on the College Essay(s)

There are a lot of resources available to support you in your essay writing.
Here are some final reminders about the writing process!

**Use the
resources
available on the
WA Counseling
Website**

**Have an adult
read your
essay(s)**

**Don't wait until
the last minute
to write the
essays-
especially the
supplements!**

**Did you answer
the question:
What do you
want the person
reading this to
know about you?**



**Thank you,
panelists!!**