

# I V Y P R E P

## University Application Consulting for U.S. Universities

Common Application Essay Questions

### 2018-2019 Common Application Essay Prompts

#### Common Application Personal Essay Prompts

Choose One Essay Prompt. 650 Words.

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. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is 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.
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.

#### 2018-2019 Common Application Additional Information Essay

650 Words.

Please provide an answer below if you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application.

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### Supplementary Essay Questions (Ivy League Universities)

#### Harvard University

(4 Questions, 350+ words)

1. ...Please use the space below to list additional intellectual activities that you have not mentioned or detailed elsewhere in your application. (150 words)
2. Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences. (150 words)
3. For students applying from outside the US & Canada: What specific plan do you have, if any, for using the education you hope to receive? (50 words)
4. The following supplementary essay is optional. Write on any one of the topics below:
  - Unusual circumstances in your life
  - Travel or living experiences in other countries
  - What you would want your future roommate to know about you
  - An intellectual that has meant the most to you
  - How you hope to use your college education
  - A list of books you have read during the past twelve months
  - ...reflect on a time when you or someone you observed had to make a choice about whether to act with integrity and honesty.
  - ...What would you do to contribute to the lives of your classmates in advancing this mission?

#### Columbia University

(7 Questions, 1350 words)

1. List a few words or phrases that describe your ideal college community. (150 words)
2. List the titles of the required readings from courses during the school year or summer that you enjoyed most in the past year. (150 words)
3. List the titles of the books you read for pleasure that you enjoyed most in the past year. (150 words)
4. List the titles of the print, electronic publications and websites you read regularly. (150 words)
5. List the titles of the films, concerts, shows, exhibits, lectures and other entertainments you enjoyed most in the past year. (150 words)
6. Please tell us what you value most about Columbia and why. (300 words)
7. Tell us what from your current and past experiences (either academic or personal) attracts you specifically to the field or fields of study that you noted in the member questions section. If you are currently undecided, please write about any field or fields in which you may have an interest at this time.

#### University of Pennsylvania

(1 Question, 650 words)

How will you explore your intellectual and academic interests at the University of Pennsylvania? Please answer this question given the specific undergraduate school to which you are applying. (400-650 words)

#### Yale University

(3 Questions, 765 words)

1. What is it about Yale that has led you to apply? (125 words)
2. Please respond in no more than 35 words to each of the following questions:
  - What inspires you? (35 words)
  - Yale's residential colleges regularly host intimate conversations with guests representing a wide range of experiences and accomplishments. What person, past or present, would you invite to speak? What question would you ask? (35 words)
  - You are teaching a Yale course. What is it called? (35 words)
  - Most first-year Yale students live in suites of four to six people. What would you contribute to the dynamic of your suite? (35 words)
3. Please choose two of the following topics and respond to each in 250 words or fewer.
  - What do you most enjoy learning? (250 words)
  - Reflect on your engagement with a community to which you belong. How do you feel you have contributed to this community? (250 words)
  - Write about something you would like us to know about you that you have not conveyed elsewhere in your application. (250 words)

#### Brown University

(5 Questions, 700 words)

1. Briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences. (150 words)
2. Why are you drawn to the area(s) of study you indicated in our Member Section, earlier in this application? If you are "undecided" or not sure which Brown concentrations match your interests, consider describing more generally the academic topics or modes of thought that engage you currently. (150 words)
3. Why Brown, and why the Brown Curriculum? (200 words)
4. Tell us where you have lived—and for how long—since you were born; whether you've always lived in the same place, or perhaps in a variety of places. (100 words)
5. We all exist within communities or groups of various sizes, origins, and purposes; pick one and tell us why it is important to you, and how it has shaped you. (100 words)

#### Cornell University

(1 Question, 650 words)

##### For College of Arts and Sciences

Describe two or three of your current intellectual interests and why they are exciting to you. Why will Cornell's College of Arts and Sciences be the right environment in which to pursue your interests? (650 words)

#### Princeton University

(4 Questions, 860 words)

1. ...Using one of the themes below ..., write about a person, event, or experience that helped you define one of your values or in some way changed how you approach the world. (500 words)
  - Tell us about a person who has influenced you in a significant way.
  - "One of the great challenges of our time is that the disparities we face today have more complex causes and point less straightforwardly to solutions." Omar Wasow, Assistant Professor, Politics; Founder, Blackplanet.com - Professor Wasow's January 2014 speech, Martin Luther King Day celebration at Princeton University.
  - "Culture is what presents us with the kinds of valuable things that can fill a life. And insofar as we can recognize the value in those things and make them part of our lives, our lives are meaningful." Gideon Rosen, Stuart Professor of Philosophy, chair of the Council of the Humanities and director of the Program in Humanistic Studies, Princeton University.
  - Using a favorite quotation from an essay or book you have read ..., tell us about an event or experience that helped you define one of your values or changed how you approach the world...
2. Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences that was particularly meaningful to you. (150 words)
3. Please tell us how you have spent the last two summers (or vacations between school years), including any jobs you have held. (150 words)
4. A few details:
  - Your favorite book and its author (below 20 words)
  - Your favorite movie (below 20 words)
  - Your favorite website (below 20 words)
  - Two adjectives your friends would use to describe you (3 words)...

#### Dartmouth College

(2 Questions, 400 words)

1. ...As you seek admission to the Class of 2022, what aspects of the College's program, community, or campus environment attract your interest? (100 words)
2. Choose one of the following prompts and respond in 250-300 words:
  - ...How do you express your creativity? What ideas or values do you explore and celebrate when your imagination wanders?
  - ... Share a moment when kindness guided your actions.
  - "I have no special talent." Albert Einstein once observed. "I am only passionately curious." Celebrate your intellectual curiosity.
  - "Dreams are lovely. But they are just dreams." television producer Shonda Rhimes '91 told graduating seniors during her 2014 Commencement address. "It's hard work that makes things happen. It's hard work that creates change." What inspires your hard work? What matters to you and how do you "make things happen" to create change?

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## University Application Consulting for U.S. Universities

Supplementary Essay Questions (Top 20 U.S. Universities)

### University of Southern California

(3 Questions, 500+ words)

1. Please respond to one of the prompts below. (250 words)
  - USC believes that one learns best when interacting with people of different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. Tell us about a time you were exposed to a new idea or when your beliefs were challenged by another point of view.
  - Describe something outside of your intended academic focus about which you are interested in learning.
  - What is something about yourself that is essential to understanding you?
2. Describe how you plan to pursue your academic interests at USC. Please feel free to address your first- and second-choice major selections. (250 words)
3. Short Questions
  - Describe yourself in three words.
  - What is your favorite snack?
  - Favorite app/website
  - Best movie of all time
  - Hashtag to describe yourself
  - ...

### Stanford University

(5 Questions, 1250 words)

1. Briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences. (150 words)
2. Briefly respond to the following inquiries so we can get to know you better. Do not feel compelled to use complete sentences.
  - What is the most significant challenge that society faces today? (50 words)
  - How did you spend your last two summers? (50 words)
  - What historical moment or event do you wish you could have witnessed? (50 words)
  - What five words best describe you? (50 words)
  - When the choice is yours, what do you read, listen to, or watch? (50 words)
  - Name one thing you are looking forward to experiencing at Stanford. (50 words)
  - Imagine you had an extra hour in the day – how would you spend that time? (50 words)
3. The Stanford community is deeply curious and driven to learn in and out of the classroom. Reflect on an idea or experience that makes you genuinely excited about learning. (250 words)
4. Virtually all of Stanford's undergraduates live on campus. Write a note to your future roommate that reveals something about you or that will help your roommate – and us – know you better. (250 words)
5. Tell us about something that is meaningful to you and why. (250 words)

### Northwestern University

(2 Questions, 300+ words)

'Why Northwestern?' Statement (completion strongly recommended)

Other parts of your application give us a sense for how you might contribute to Northwestern. But we also want to consider how Northwestern will contribute to your interests and goals. In 300 words or less, help us understand what aspects of Northwestern appeal most to you, and how you'll make use of specific resources and opportunities here. (300 words)

### John Hopkins University

(1 Question, 400 words)

Successful students at Johns Hopkins make the biggest impact by collaborating with others, including peers, mentors, and professors. Talk about a time, in or outside the classroom, when you worked with others and what you learned from the experience. (400 words)

### Boston University

(1 Question, 250 words)

What about being a student at Boston University most excites you? (250 words)

### University of California

(4 Questions, 1400 words)

You have 8 questions to choose from. You must respond to only 4 of the 8 questions. Each response is limited to a maximum of 350 words.

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.
2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.
3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.
5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?
6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.
7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
8. Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you stand out as a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?

### University of Chicago

(2 Questions, no word limit)

1. Choose one of the six extended essay options and upload a one- or two- page response.
  - "...What do you think is important but underdiscussed? – Anonymous Suggestion
  - ...Describe your new intended major. Why are you interested in it and what courses or areas of focus within it might you want to explore? ...
  - ...We're familiar with the previously-noted set and with actual elements like hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon, but select and explain another small group of things (say, under five) that you believe compose our world. – Inspired by Dani Plung, Class of 2017
  - The late NYTimes photographer Bill Cunningham once said 'Fashion is the armor to survive the reality of everyday life. I don't think you could do away with it. It would be like doing away with civilization.' Tell us about your 'armor'. – Inspired by Adam Berger, Class of 2020
  - ...Discuss something that you love not in spite of but rather due to its quirks or imperfections. – Inspired by Alex Serbanescu, Class of 2021
  - In the spirit of adventurous inquiry, pose your own question or choose one of our past prompts...
2. 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.

### Tufts University

(3 Questions, 600 words)

1. Which aspects of Tufts' curriculum or undergraduate experience prompt your application? 'Why Tufts?' (100 words)
2. There is a Quaker saying: "Let your life speak." Describe the environment in which you were raised—your family, home, neighborhood or community—and how it influenced the person you are today. (250 words)
3. Answer one of the following questions...(250 words)
  - It's cool to be smart. Tell us about the subjects or ideas that excite your intellectual curiosity.
  - In a time when we're always plugged in (and sometimes tuned out), tell us about a time when you listened, truly listened, to a person or a cause. How did that moment change you?
  - Celebrate the role of sports in your life.
  - Whether you've built blanket forts or circuit boards, created crayon masterpieces or mixed media art installations, tell us: what have you invented, engineered, created or designed? Or what do you hope to?
  - What makes you happy? Why?

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Supplementary Essay Questions  
(Top 20 U.S. Universities)

### University of Michigan

(3 Questions, 850 words)

1. If you could only do one of the activities you have listed in the Activities section of your Common Application, which one would you keep doing? Why? (100 words)
2. ...Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it. (250 words)
3. Describe the unique qualities that attract you to the specific undergraduate College or School (including preferred admission and dual degree programs) to which you are applying at the University of Michigan. How would that curriculum support your interests? (500 words)

### Duke University

(2 Optional Questions, 250+ words)

(Optional) Duke University seeks a talented, engaged student body that embodies the wide range of human experience; we believe that the diversity of our students makes our community stronger. If you'd like to share a perspective you bring or experiences you've had to help us understand you better-perhaps related to a community you belong to or your family or cultural background-we encourage you to do so. Real people are reading your application, and we want to do our best to understand and appreciate the real people applying to Duke. (250 word limit)

(Optional) Duke's commitment to diversity and inclusion includes gender identity and sexual orientation. If you would like to share with us more about either, and have not done so elsewhere in the application, we invite you to do so here.

### Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

(5 Questions, 950 words)

1. Tell us about something you do simply for the pleasure of it. (100 words)
2. ...which department or program at MIT appeals to you and why? (100 words)
3. ...Describe one way in which you have contributed to your community, whether in your family, the classroom, your neighborhood, etc. (250 words)
4. Describe the world you come from; for example, your family, clubs, school, community, city, or town. How has that world shaped your dreams and aspirations? (250 words)
5. Tell us about the most significant challenge you've faced or something important that didn't go according to plan. How did you manage the situation? (250 words)

### Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech)

(2 Questions, 300 words)

1. ...why are you interested in attending Georgia Tech? (150 words)
2. Please choose ONE of the following questions and provide an answer in 150 words or less:
  - Tech's motto is Progress and Service. ...students who ultimately have a broad impact first had a significant one at home. What is your role in your immediate or extended family? And how have you seen evidence of your impact on them?
  - ...Have you had any experience as an entrepreneur? What would you like Georgia Tech to provide to further your entrepreneurial interests?
  - We challenge our students to 'be comfortable being uncomfortable.' Tell us about a time in high school that you felt outside of your comfort zone and the resolution.

### Carnegie Mellon University

(4 Questions, 1500+ words)

1. Please submit a one page, single-spaced essay that explains why you have chosen Carnegie Mellon and your particular major(s), department(s) or program(s). This essay should include the reasons why you've chosen the major(s), any goals or relevant work plans and any other information you would like us to know. For freshmen applying to more than one college or program, please mention each college or program to which you are applying. Because our admission committees review applicants by college and program, your essay can impact our final decision. Candidates applying for early decision or transfer may apply to only one college and department.
2. List the books (if any) you've read this year for pleasure. Choose one and in a sentence describe its impact on you. (500 words)
3. If there was an interruption during your secondary school or collegiate experience or between your secondary school and collegiate experience (gap year(s)) when you were not enrolled and as a result, not making normal academic progress, please explain the reason for the interruption. (500 words)
4. While not a requirement, have you been interviewed by an alumni or on campus representative prior to applying for admission? If so, indicate the name of your interviewer and tell us how it impacted your decision to apply. (500 words)

### New York University

(1 Question, 400 words)

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 words)

### California Institute of Technology (Caltech)

(6 Questions, 1900 words)

1. What three experiences or activities have helped you explore your desire to study and possibly pursue a career in STEM? (200 words)
2. Please list three books, along with their authors, that have been particularly meaningful to you. ...include a sentence explaining their influence upon you (200 characters each)...
3. ...Share a difficult situation that has challenged you. What was your response, and how did you arrive at a solution? (200 words)
4. ...Please describe an unusual way in which you have fun. (200 words)
5. ...How do you see yourself contributing to the diversity of Caltech's community? (200 words)
6. ...how do you believe Caltech will best fuel your intellectual curiosity and help you meet your goals? (500 words)

### University of Illinois (Urbana Champaign)

(2 Questions, 800 words)

1. Explain your interest in the major you selected and describe how you... recently explored or developed this interest inside and/or outside the classroom...how this major relates to your future career goals...explain your academic interests and strengths or your future career goals. You may include any majors... of study you're currently considering. (400 words)
2. If you select a second-choice major other than the Division of General Studies on your application, write a second essay explaining your interest in this major, too. (400 words)