

College Essay Topics

Read through the topics listed below. All are topics that have been required on college admission forms. Choose the one that you feel you can answer best. Write a 2–3 page essay developing the topic.

- What have you undertaken or done on your own in the last year or two that has nothing to do with academic work? (Northwestern)
- Imagine that you have the opportunity to travel back through time. At what point in history would you like to stop and why? (Swarthmore)
- What is the best advice you ever received? Why? And did you follow it? (University of Pennsylvania)
- 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. (New York University)
- What do you think has been the most important social or political movement of the 20th century? Do you share a personal identification with this cause? (Trinity College, CT)
- If you were to look back on your high school years, what advice would you give to someone beginning their high school career? (Simmons)
- It has been said [by Andy Warhol] that “in the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes.” Describe your fifteen minutes. (New York University)
- What single adjective do you think would be most frequently used to describe you by those who know you best? Briefly explain. (Stanford)
- Describe an intellectual experience of the past two years that has given you great satisfaction. (Amherst)
- If you were to describe yourself by a quotation, what would the quote be? Explain your answer. (Dartmouth)
- Tell us about the neighborhood that you grew up in and how it helped shape you into the kind of person you are today. (Yale and the University of Chicago)
- You’ve just written a 300-page autobiography. Send us page 217. (University of Pennsylvania)
- If you could be a “fly on the wall” to observe any situation (historical, personal, or otherwise) describe what you would choose to observe and why. What would you hope to learn and how would it benefit you? (University of Pittsburgh)
- If we could only admit one more student to the University of Pittsburgh, why should it be you? (University of Pittsburgh)
- Describe a risk that you have taken and discuss its impact on your life. (Kalamazoo College)
- If you could spend a year with any real or fictional person in the past, present, or future, whom would you choose? Why? (Kalamazoo College)

- What invention would the world be better off without, and why? (Kalamazoo College)
- If you had the gift of telepathy, the ability to read other people’s minds, would you use this gift or not? Explain. (Middle East Technical University)
- Tell us about one of the best conversations you’ve had. (Stanford)
- If you were to write a book, on what theme or subject matter would it be based, and why? (Stanford)
- Tell us how a particular book, play, film, piece of music, dance performance, scientific theory or experiment or work of art has influenced you. If you choose a novel, film, or play, assume we know the plot. (Notre Dame)
- Select a technological innovation of this century and discuss its effects on your family, local community or nation. (Notre Dame)
- Read Annie Dillard’s *An American Childhood*. Choose one of her observations or ideas and write a creative, reflective or provocative essay. (Notre Dame)
- Read Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Drawing upon personal experience, write a creative, reflective or provocative essay. (Notre Dame)
- If you had only \$10 to plan a day’s adventure, where would you go, what would you do, and whom would you take with you? (Johns Hopkins)
- Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you. (Common Application)
- Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you. (Common Application)
- Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence. (Common Application)
- Describe a character in fiction, an historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence. (Common Application)
- A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity on you. (Common Application)