

2021-2022 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.

CU Boulder – Supplemental Essay Prompt 2020-2021

At the University of Colorado Boulder, no two Buffs are alike. We value difference and support equity and inclusion of all students and their many intersecting identities. Pick one of your unique identities and describe its significance.

With the word count topping out at 650, we recommend choosing a topic that can get some mileage. Your identity should come with a couple anecdotes and examples of how this facet of you comes out in real life. What brings these qualities out in you? Can you control this part of you, or do you go on auto-pilot? Go beyond the classic “I’m a daughter/I’m a student/I’m a soccer player,” and mine your life for the other roles you play. Are you like a second mother to your little sisters? Are you the Pied Piper of your friend group, deciding which movie to go see or which restaurant to get late night food at? Whatever your identity, get specific and explain what it means to you and those around you.

CSU – Supplemental Essay Prompts 2020-2021

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- 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?
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- 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.
- Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- 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?
- 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.

Tips:

- Thoughtful content and careful attention to quality writing can be compelling in admission and scholarship decisions.
- Demonstrate your ability to organize your thoughts by keeping your essay focused on the topic you've chosen.
- This is not a writing sample or academic paper, it's an opportunity for us to get to know you. Make it personal by sharing information specific to your experiences and perspective.
- Be sure the words are your own and (appropriately) reflect your personality. We want to get to know YOU, so use a “voice” that's authentic.
- Plagiarism is grounds for immediate rejection of your application.
- Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal, though your response must be at least 250 words.