

# College Essays

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### Common Application Essays

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Please write an essay of 250 – 500 words on a topic of your choice or on one of the options listed below, and attach it to your application before submission. Please indicate your topic by checking the appropriate box. This personal essay helps us become acquainted with you as a person and student, apart from courses, grades, test scores, and other objective data. It will also demonstrate your ability to organize your thoughts and express yourself. NOTE: Your Common Application essay should be the same for all colleges. Do not customize it in any way for individual colleges. Colleges that want customized essay responses will ask for them on a supplement form.

Choose one topic from the six below:

- Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.
- Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
- Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
- Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.
- 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 to you.
- Topic of your choice.

**Short Answer** (150 words or fewer)

- Please briefly elaborate on one of your activities (extracurricular, personal activities, or work experience)

Source: [https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Docs/DownloadForms/2012/2012AppFY\\_download.pdf](https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Docs/DownloadForms/2012/2012AppFY_download.pdf)

Brown University

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### **2010 and 2011/2012 Essay Topics**

- **Required Essay**

- Please respond to one of the following essay topics: A, B, or C (Upload your response or attach it separately, and include your full name, school, and birth date at the top of the page. We prefer that you limit your response to 500 words maximum, and that you avoid repeating the essay submitted for the Common Application.):
  - A. Tell us about an intellectual experience, project, class, or book that has influenced or inspired you.
  - B. What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given, and why?
  - C. French novelist Anatole France wrote: "An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you do know and what you don't." What don't you know?

- **Program in Liberal Medical Education (PLME) (Both essays required for applicants to this program)**

- 1. Most high school seniors are unsure about eventual career choices. What experiences have led you to consider medicine as your future profession? Please describe specifically why you have chosen to apply to the Program in Liberal Medical Education in pursuit of your career in medicine. Also, be sure to indicate your rationale on how the PLME is a "good fit" for your personal, academic, and future professional goals.
- 2. Since the Program in Liberal Medical Education espouses a broad-based liberal education, please describe your fields of interest in both the sciences and the liberal arts. Be specific about what courses and aspects of the program will be woven into a potential educational plan.

- **Brown-RISD Dual Degree Program (Required essay for applicants to this program)**

- In choosing to apply for the Brown-RISD A.B./B.F.A. dual degree program, your interests and future plans will be influenced and enhanced by the courses offered by both colleges. We are curious as to why you have chosen to apply for this specific dual degree program; please tell us your reasons for selecting it, and what you envision as its impact on your education and career.
  
- **Engineering (To be completed by applicants whose primary interest is Engineering; please check the box and address each question separately. We also suggest limiting your total response to 500 words.)**
  - 1. Many applicants to college are unsure about eventual majors. What factors led you to an interest in the field of Engineering?
  - 2. What experiences beyond school work have broadened your interest in Engineering?
  - 3. Brown offers programs in Biomedical, Chemical, Civil, Computer, Electrical, Materials, and Mechanical Engineering. Since there is a common core curriculum within Engineering, students need not select a specific area until their junior year. We are curious to know, however, if any particular program within Engineering presently appeals to you. If so, please discuss that choice.
  
- **Chemistry/Computer Science/Geology/Physics (To be completed by applicants whose primary interest is one of the following areas of study; please check one box and address each question separately. We also suggest limiting your total response to 500 words.)**
  - 1. Many applicants to college are unsure about eventual majors. What factors led you to an interest in the field of science you have selected?
  - 2. What experiences beyond school work have broadened your interest in this field?
  - 3. What concept in your anticipated major were you most proud of mastering?
  - 4. Briefly describe the course(s) you have taken relating to your chosen field of science.

California Institute of Technology

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### **2010 and 2011/2012 Essay Topics**

- **Required Essay**
  - Interest in math, science, or engineering manifests itself in many forms. Caltech professor and Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman (1918-1988) explained, “I’d make a motor, I’d make a gadget

that would go off when something passed a photocell, I'd play around with selenium"; he was exploring his interest in science, as he put it, by "piddling around all the time." In a page, more or less, tell the Admissions Committee how you express your interest, curiosity, or excitement about math, science or engineering.

#### Columbia University

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- No additional essay required
  
- Short Answer Questions
  - Please tell us what you found meaningful about one of the above mentioned books, publications or cultural events
  - Please tell us what academic class has been your favorite and why.
  - Please tell us what you find most appealing about Columbia and why
  - For applicants to Columbia College, please tell us what attracts you specifically to the field or fields of study that you noted in the Application Data section. If you are currently undecided, please write about any field or fields in which you may have interest at this time, but have not yet selected as a major interest.
  - For applicants to The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, please tell us what attracts you specifically to the study of engineering

#### Cornell University (2010)

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- **Required Essay**
  - On a separate sheet of paper, please respond to the essay question below (maximum of 500 words) that corresponds to the undergraduate college(s) to which you are applying. Be sure to include your full legal name exactly as it appears on passports or other official documents and date of birth, and attach the page to the back of this form. If you are utilizing the primary/alternate admission option, you must complete an essay for both colleges; please complete the essays that correspond to your primary and alternate choice.
  
- **College of Agriculture and Life Sciences**

- The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CAL S) develops leaders committed to the improvement of life. Describe how your interests and related experiences have influenced your selection of major and how CAL S will prepare you to be a leader in your chosen field.
  
- **College of Architecture, Art, and Planning**
  - How does the major you would like to study in the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning match your intellectual, academic, and career interests? Discuss any activities you have engaged in that are relevant to your chosen major.
  
- **College of Arts and Sciences**
  - Describe your intellectual interests, their evolution, and what makes them exciting to you. Tell us how you will utilize the academic programs in the College of Arts and Sciences to further explore your interests, intended major, or field of study.
  
- **College of Engineering**
  - Engineers turn ideas (technical, scientific, mathematical) into reality. Tell us about an engineering idea you have or your interest in engineering. Explain how Cornell Engineering can help you further explore this idea or interest.
  
- **School of Hotel Administration**
  - What work and non-work experiences, academic interests, and career goals influenced your decision to study hospitality management? How will these contribute to your success at the School of Hotel Administration?
  
- **College of Human Ecology**
  - What do you value about the College of Human Ecology perspective and mission as you consider your goals and plans for the future? Reflect on our majors that interest you as you respond.
  
- **School of Industrial and Labor Relations**

- Describe your intellectual interests, their evolution, and what makes them exciting to you. In your essay please address how the ILR curriculum will help you fulfill these interests and your long-term goals.

#### Dartmouth College (2010)

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- No additional essay required

#### Duke University (2009)

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- **Engineering Applicants**

- If you are applying to the Pratt School of Engineering, please discuss why you want to study engineering and why you would like to study at Duke.

- **Transfer Applicants**

- Consider the books, essays, poems, or journal articles you have read over the last year or two, either for school or leisure. Please discuss the way in which one of them has changed your understanding of the world, other people, or yourself.
- If you want to transfer to Trinity College of Arts & Sciences, please discuss why you consider Duke a good match for you. Is there something in particular at Duke that attracts you? If you want to transfer to the Pratt School of Engineering, please be sure to answer question 28a above.

- **Optional Questions**

- (For Arts & Sciences Applicants Only) If you are applying to Trinity College of Arts & Sciences, please discuss why you consider Duke a good match for you. Is there something in particular at Duke that attracts you? Please limit your response to one or two paragraphs.
- If you have participated in any significant research activity outside of school, please provide a brief description and limit your response to one or two paragraphs.
- We seek to understand and appreciate you as an individual. If there is a parent, sibling, other relative, or friend who you think could help us do that, we would be happy to receive a one-page letter from one of them. (It must be mailed to our office.) This optional information will be

considered in our understanding of you as a person, but will not be formally evaluated as part of your application.

#### Emory University (2010)

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- **Required Essay**

- Why Emory (short answer): Many students decide to apply to Emory University based on our size, location, reputation, and yes, the weather. Besides these valid reasons as a possible college choice, why is Emory University a particularly good match for you?

#### Harvard University (2010)

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- **Required Essay**

- Possible Topics:
  - Unusual circumstances in your life
  - Travel or living experiences in other countries
  - Books that have affected you the most
  - An academic experience (course, project, paper or research topic) that has meant the most to you
  - A list of books you have read during the past twelve months

#### Harvard Business School

source: <http://www.hbs.edu/mba/admissions/writtenapplication.html>

#### Essays (MBA applicants only):

All application questions below are required.

- Tell us about three of your accomplishments. (600 words)
- Tell us three setbacks you have faced. (600 words)
- Why do you want an MBA? (400 words)
- Answer a question you wish we'd asked. (400 words)



Joint degree applicants:

- How do you expect the joint degree experience to benefit you on both a professional and a personal level? (400 words)

### **Recommender Questions (for both MBA and 2+2 applicants)**

**Recommendations must be completed online.** The recommendation form includes the following four essay questions, along with other types of questions.

- Please comment on the context of your interaction with the applicant. If applicable, briefly describe the applicant's role in your organization. (250 words)
- How does the candidate's performance compare to other well-qualified individuals in similar roles? (250 words)
- Please describe the most important piece of constructive feedback you have given the applicant. Please detail the circumstances and the applicant's response. (250 words)
- Please make additional statements about the applicant's performance, potential, or personal qualities you believe would be helpful to the MBA Admissions Board. (250 words)

Harvard Business School Essay Tips

<http://www.stacyblackman.com/2010/05/18/tuesday-tips-%E2%80%93-hbs-essay-questions/>

How to write an Ivy League admissions essay in 5 steps

<http://www.hopelesstoharvard.com/ivy-league-schools/college-admissions-essay/>

New York University

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### **2010 Essay Topics**

- **Required Essay**
  - The essay offers an opportunity for you to help us become acquainted with you in ways different from grades, test scores, and other objective data. It allows you to demonstrate your ability to organize your thoughts and express yourself. With this in mind, please write an essay, approximately 400-500 words in length. You may select one of the following topics, or you may choose to tell us something about yourself that has not been presented to your satisfaction in this application. Be sure to put your name and Social Security number at the top of your essay.

- The best writing is often very personal. All kinds of experiences-serious, funny, unexplained, fleeting-can influence our lives and help make us who we are. Tell us about a person, place, or event in your life that has particular meaning for you, and why it is important to you. We'd especially like to hear about someone or something that has affected your life that may not have affected or even been noticed by other people.
  - Select a creative work- a novel, a film, 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 impact the work has had on you. (We are more interested in how the work has affected you rather than reading a detailed plot summary or a description of the work.)
  - New York is a city full of people from other places. They all bring with them a story of where they are from. Tell us something about where you're from and what single facet of your hometown experience has shaped you into the person you are today.
- **Transfers Only**
    - Please discuss your interest in transferring to New York University. Explain your reasons for wanting to leave your current college or university (or if not currently in attendance, why you left the last institution you attended), and describe how you feel your educational goals can be better achieved at NYU.

### **2011/2012 Essay Topics**

- Please respond to each of the following questions using a maximum of 1,500 characters in the space provided.
  - A. Why NYU?
  - B. Regardless of whether or not you have an intended major or concentration, please elaborate on an academic area of interest and how you wish to explore it at NYU's campuses in New York or Abu Dhabi or at one of our global academic centers around the world. Please share any activities or experiences you have had that have cultivated your intellectual interests leading you to choose to study at the NYU campus of your choice.
  - C. What intrigues you? Tell us about one work of art, scientific achievement, piece of literature, method of communication, or place in the world (a film, book, performance, website, event, location, etc.), and explain its significance to you.

### 2010 Essay Topics

- **Required Essay**
  - What are the unique qualities of Northwestern — and of the specific undergraduate school to which you are applying — that make you want to attend the University? In what ways do you hope to take advantage of the qualities you have identified?
  
- **Returning Adult Essay**
  - How have the concept and value of education changed for you since you were a teenager?

### 2011/2012 Essay Topics

- **Statement on Research (optional)**
  - If you have done research or independent study outside of school, please include an abstract or summary of your work on a separate sheet.

### 2010 Essay Topics

- **Required Essay**
  - In addition to the essay you have written for the Common Application, please select one of the following themes and write an essay of about 500 words in response. Please do not repeat, in full or in part, the essay you wrote for the Common Application.
  - 1. Tell us about a person who has influenced you in a significant way.
  - 2. Using the following as a jumping off point, tell us about an event or experience that helped you define one of your values or changed how you approach the world: “Princeton in the Nation’s Service” was the title of a speech given by Woodrow Wilson on the 150th anniversary of the University. It became the unofficial Princeton motto and was expanded for the University’s 250th anniversary to “Princeton in the nation’s service and in the service of all nations.” Woodrow Wilson, Princeton Class of 1879, served on the faculty and was Princeton’s president from 1902–1910.

- 3. Using the following quotation as a jumping off point, tell us about an event or experience that helped you define one of your values or changed how you approach the world: “Some questions cannot be answered./ They become familiar weights in the hand,/ Round stones pulled from the pocket, unyielding and cool.” Jane Hirshfield, poet, Princeton Class of 1973
  - 4. Using a favorite quotation from an essay or book you have read in the last three years as a jumping off point, tell us about an event or experience that helped you define one of your values or changed how you approach the world. Please write the quotation at the beginning of your essay. Notes: 1. “Woman in Red Coat,” from *Of Gravity and Angels* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988). © 1988 Jane Hirshfield. Reprinted by permission of Jane Hirshfield.
- **Bachelor of Science in Engineering Program**
    - If you are interested in pursuing a B.S.E. (Bachelor of Science in Engineering) degree, please write an essay describing why you are interested in studying engineering, any experiences in or exposure to engineering you have had, and how you think the programs in engineering offered at Princeton suit your particular interests.

### 2011/2012 Essay Topics

- Please tell us how you have spent the last two summers (or vacations between school years), including any jobs you have held, if not already detailed on the Common Application.
- Required Essay topics are the same

University of Chicago

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### Past Essay Questions

- Find x.

*Inspired by Benjamin Nuzzo, an admitted student from Eton College, UK*

- Dog and Cat. Coffee and Tea. *Great Gatsby* and *Catcher in the Rye*. Everyone knows there are two types of people in the world. What are they?

*Inspired by an alumna of the Class of 2006*

- How did you get caught? (Or not caught, as the case may be.)

*Proposed by Kelly Kennedy, a fourth-year in the College. (2009–2010)*

- Chicago author Nelson Algren said, “A writer does well if in his whole life he can tell the story of one street.” Chicagoans, but not just Chicagoans, have always found something instructive, and pleasing, and profound in the stories of their block, of Main Street, of Highway 61, of a farm lane, of the Celestial Highway. Tell us the story of a street, path, road—real or imagined or metaphorical.

*(2008–2009)*

- UChicago professor W. J. T. Mitchell entitled his 2005 book *What Do Pictures Want?* Describe a picture, and explore what it wants.

*Proposed by Anna Andel, a graduate of Bard High School Early College, New York, NY (2007–2008)*

- In Jorge Luis Borges’ *Labyrinths*, he writes a parable entitled “Borges y yo,” which translates as “Borges and I.” In it, Borges writes about “the other one,” his counterpart, who shares his preference for “hourglasses, maps, eighteenth century typography, the taste of coffee, and the prose of Stevenson,” but is not the same as he. “The other one” is the famous author; “the other one” is the one “things happen to.” He concludes this parable with the line, “I do not know which of us has written this page.” Write a page. Who has written it?

*Proposed by Zhuyi Elizabeth Sun, a graduate of Inglemoor High School, Bothell, WA (2007–2008)*

- Modern improvisational comedy had its start with the Compass Players, a group of University of Chicago students who later formed the Second City comedy troupe. Here is a chance to play along. Improvise a story, essay, or script that meets all of the following requirements:

- It must include the line “And yes I said yes I will Yes” (*Ulysses*, by James Joyce).
- Its characters may not have superpowers.
- Your work has to mention the University of Chicago, but please, no accounts of a high school student applying to the University—this is fiction, not autobiography.
- Your work must include at least four of the following elements: a paper airplane, a transformation, a shoe, the invisible hand, two doors, pointillism, a fanciful explanation of the Pythagorean Theorem, a ventriloquist or ventriloquism, the periodic table of the elements, the concept of jeong, number two pencils. *(2007–2008)*

- “Don’t play what’s there, play what’s not there.”—Miles Davis (1926–91)

*Inspired by Jack Reeves, a graduate of Ridgefield High School, Ridgefield, CT (2006–2007)*

- The Cartesian coordinate system is a popular method of representing real numbers and is the bane of eighth graders everywhere. Since its introduction by Descartes in 1637, this means of visually characterizing mathematical values has swept the globe, earning a significant role in branches of mathematics such as algebra, geometry, and calculus. Describe yourself as a point or series of points on this axial arrangement. If you are a function, what are you? In which quadrants do you lie? Are x and y enough for you, or do you warrant some love from the z-axis? Be sure to include your domain, range, derivative, and asymptotes, should any apply. Your possibilities are positively and negatively unbounded.

*Inspired by Joshua Nalven, a graduate of West Orange High School, West Orange, NJ (2006–2007)*

- The instructor said,

Go home and write

a page tonight.

And let that page come out of you—

Then, it will be true.

—“Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes

Perhaps you recognize this poem. If you do, then your mind has probably moved on to the question the next line poses: “I wonder if it’s that simple?” Saying who we are is never simple (read the entire poem if you need evidence of that). Write a truthful page about yourself for us, an audience you do not know—a very tall order. Hughes begins: “I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem./I went to school there, then Durham, then here/to this college on the hill above Harlem./I am the only colored student in my class.” That is, each of us is of a certain age and of a particular family background. We have lived somewhere and been schooled. We are each what we feel and see and hear. Begin there and see what happens. (2005–2006)

- University of Chicago alumna and renowned author/critic Susan Sontag said, “The only interesting answers are those that destroy the questions.” We all have heard serious questions, absurd questions, and seriously absurd questions, some of which cannot be answered without obliterating the very question. Destroy a question with your answer.

*Inspired by Aleksandra Ciric, Oyster Bay High School, Oyster Bay, New York (2005–2006)*

- Superstring theory has revolutionized speculation about the physical world by suggesting that strings play a pivotal role in the universe. Strings, however, always have explained or enriched our lives, from Theseus's escape route from the Labyrinth, to kittens playing with balls of yarn, to the single hair that held the sword above Damocles, to the basic awfulness of string cheese, to the Old Norse tradition that one's life is a thread woven into a tapestry of fate, to the beautiful sounds of the finely tuned string of a violin, to the children's game of cat's cradle, to the concept of stringing someone along. Use the power of string to explain the biggest or the smallest phenomenon.

*Inspired by Adam Sobolweski, Pittsford Mendon High School, Pittsford, New York (2005–2006)*

- Have you ever walked through the aisles of a warehouse store like Costco or Sam's Club and wondered who would buy a jar of mustard a foot and a half tall? We've bought it, but it didn't stop us from wondering about other things, like absurd eating contests, impulse buys, excess, unimagined uses for mustard, storage, preservatives, notions of bigness...and dozens of other ideas both silly and serious. Write an essay somehow inspired by super-huge mustard.

*Based on a suggestion by Katherine Gold of Cherry Hill High School East, Cherry Hill, NJ (2004–2005)*

- People often think of language as a connector, something that brings people together by helping them share experiences, feelings, ideas, etc. We, however, are interested in how language sets people apart. Start with the peculiarities of your own personal language—the voice you use when speaking most intimately to yourself, the vocabulary that spills out when you're startled, or special phrases and gestures that no one else seems to use or even understand—and tell us how your language makes you unique. You may want to think about subtle riffs or idiosyncrasies based on cadence, rhythm, rhyme, or (mis)pronunciation.

*Based on a suggestion by Kimberly Traube of La Jolla Country Day School, La Jolla, CA (2004–2005)*

- In a book entitled *The Mind's I*, by Douglas Hofstadter, philosopher Daniel C. Dennett posed the following problem: Suppose you are an astronaut stranded on Mars whose spaceship has broken down beyond repair. In your disabled craft there is a Teleclone Mark IV teleporter that can swiftly and painlessly dismantle your body, producing a molecule-by-molecule blueprint to be beamed to Earth. There, a Teleclone receiver stocked with the requisite atoms will produce, from the beamed instructions, you—complete with all your memories, thoughts, feelings, and opinions. If you activate the Teleclone Mark IV, which astronaut are you—the one dismantled on Mars or the one produced from a blueprint on Earth? Suppose further that an improved Teleclone Mark V is developed that can obtain its blueprint without destroying the original. Are you then two astronauts at once? If not, which one are you?

*To celebrate twenty years of uncommon essay questions, we brought back this favorite from 1984. (2004–2005)*

- If you could balance on a tightrope, over what landscape would you walk? (No net.)

*Inspired by Emma Ross, a graduate of West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North, Plainsboro, NJ (2003–2004)*

- Albert Einstein once said, “The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.” Propose your own original theory to explain one of the 16 mysteries below. Your theory does not need to be testable or even probable; however, it should provide some laws, principles, and/or causes to explain the facts, phenomena, or existence of one of these mysteries. You can make your theory artistic, scientific, conspiracy-driven, quantum, fanciful, or otherwise ingenious—but be sure it is your own and gives us an impression of how you think about the world.

*Love, Non-Dairy Creamer, Sleep and Dreams, Gray, Crop Circles, The Platypus, The Beginning of Everything, Art, Time Travel, Language, The End of Everything, The Roanoke Colony, Numbers, Mona Lisa’s Smile, The College Rankings in U.S. News and World Report, Consciousness Inspired by Akash Goel, a graduate of Saint Bede Academy, Peru, IL (2003–2004)*

- How do you feel about Wednesday?

*Inspired by Maximilian Pascual Ortega, a graduate of Maine Township High School South, Park Ridge, IL (2002–2003)*

Source: <https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/apply/essays/past.shtml>

## **2010 Essay Topics**

- **Required Essays (choose one)**
  - How did you get caught? (Or not caught, as the case may be.)
  - The late-eighteenth-century popular philosopher and cultural critic George Lichtenberg wrote, "Just as we outgrow a pair of trousers, we outgrow acquaintances, libraries, principles, etc. at times before they're worn out and at times-and this is worst of all-before we have new ones." Write an essay about something you have outgrown, perhaps before you had a replacement a



friend, a political philosophy, a favorite author, or anything that has had an influence on you. What, if anything, has taken its place?

- "Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust," wrote the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." What is "human personality?" Is it obvious what uplifts and what degrades it? Can law be justified on the basis of it? We want to hear your thoughts on justice as it relates to this "human personality."
- From game theory to Ultimate Frisbee to the great Chicago Scavenger Hunt, we at the University of Chicago take games seriously. We bet you do, too. Even if "just a game," sport, play, and other kinds of games seem to share at the very least an insistence that we take seriously a set of rules entirely peculiar to the circumstance of the game. You might say, in order to play a game we must take it seriously. Think playfully-or play thoughtfully-about games: how they distract us or draw us into the world, create community and competition, tease us and test us with stakes both set apart from and meaningful to everyday life. Don't tell us about The Big Game; rather, tell us about players and games.
- In the spirit of adventurous inquiry, pose a question of your own. If your prompt is original and thoughtful then you should have little trouble writing a great essay. Draw on your best qualities as a writer, thinker, visionary, social critic, sage, citizen of the world, or future citizen of the University of Chicago; take a little risk and have fun.

## **2011/2012 Essay Topics**

### 1. "What does Play-Doh™ have to do with Plato?" – *The 2011 University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt List*

- Every May, the University of Chicago hosts the world's largest scavenger hunt. As part of this year's hunt, students raced to find the shortest path between two seemingly unrelated things by traveling through Wikipedia articles.
- Wikipedia is so passé. Without the help of everyone's favorite collaborative internet encyclopedia, show us your own unique path from Play-Doh™ to Plato.

*Inspired by Ayla Amon, AB'10, Daniel Citron, AB'09, and Benjamin Umans, AB'10*

2. Observation, Hypothesis, Experiment, Analysis, Conclusion; since the 17th century, the scientific method has been the generally accepted way to investigate, explore, and acquire new knowledge. The actual process of intellectual discovery, however, is rarely so simple or objective. The human mind often

leaps from observation to conclusion with ease, rushes headlong into hypothesis-less experiments, or dwells on the analysis, refusing to conclude.

- Tell us about your non-scientific method. (Diagrams, graphs, and/or visual aids allowed within your essay.)

*Inspired by Megen Cowett, AB'11*

3. Spanish poet Antonio Machado wrote, "Between living and dreaming there is a third thing. Guess it."

- Give us your guess.

*Inspired by Jill Hampshire, AB'08*

4. While working at the Raytheon Company, Percy Spencer noticed that standing in front of a magnetron (used to generate microwave radio signals) caused a chocolate bar in his pocket to melt. He then placed a bowl of corn in front of the device, and soon it was popping all over the room. A couple years later, Raytheon was selling the first commercial microwave oven.

- Write about a time you found something you weren't looking for.

*Inspired by Ashwin Acharya, an entering student from Hunter College High School, NY*

5. In the spirit of adventurous inquiry, pose a question of your own. If your prompt is original and thoughtful, then you should have little trouble writing a great essay. Draw on your best qualities as a writer, thinker, visionary, social critic, sage, citizen of the world, or future citizen of the University of Chicago; take a little risk, and have fun.

6. Don't write about reverse psychology. *Inspired by Andy Jordan, AB'13*

Source: <https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/apply/essays/>

University of Michigan

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## 2010 Essay Topics

- **Required Essay (choose one)**
  - Describe a setback that you have faced. How did you resolve it? How did the outcome affect you? If something similar happened in the future, how would you react?

- Discuss an issue of local concern. Why is this issue important to you? How do you think it should be addressed?
- Tell us about a book you have read that you found especially challenging, stimulating, or provocative. Explain why it made an impact on you.
  
- **Taubman College of Architecture + Urban Planning, School of Information, College of Pharmacy, and School of Social Work**
  - For what reasons do you wish to be considered for Preferred Admission to your school or college of interest? What are your career goals and how will Preferred Admission to your school or college help you achieve these goals?
  
- **Stephen M. Ross School of Business**
  - Assume you would like to start an organization or project in your community right now to accomplish a particular goal. 1) Describe your organization or project, briefly identify why it is important to you, and explain the steps you would take to start it. 2) How, specifically, might your education at U-M and the Ross School of Business affect your approach to the same project if you were to start it after you graduated from college?
  
- **School of Education**
  - Based on your experience and desired goals, tell us why you wish to be considered for preferred admission to the School of Education. What impact do you hope to have on the field of education?

### **2011/2012 Essay Topics**

- **Essay #1 (Required for all applicants. Approximately 250 words.)**
- Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine, interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage. Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it.
  
- **Essay #2 (Required for all applicants. 500 words maximum.)**

- 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?

University of Pennsylvania

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## 2010 Essay Topics

- **Required Essay** (Do not exceed one page)
  - Benjamin Franklin established the Union Fire Company, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Society, Pennsylvania Hospital, and, of course, the charity school that evolved into the University of Pennsylvania. As they served the larger community of Philadelphia, each institution in turn formed its own community. Which of the academic communities and social communities that now comprise the University of Pennsylvania are most interesting to you and how will you contribute to them and to the larger Penn community?
- **Optional Essay** (Do not exceed one page)
  - You have just completed your 300-page autobiography. Please submit page 217.
- **Huntsman Program in International Studies & Business** (required only if applying to joint-degree program)
  - Discuss a current international issue which demonstrates how international affairs and business intersect.
- **Jerome Fisher Program in Management & Technology** (required only if applying to joint-degree program)
  - Discuss your interest in combining management and technology. How might Penn's coordinated dual-degree program in business and engineering help you to meet your goals? Please be sure to address the nature and extent of your interests in both business and engineering.
- **Nursing and Healthcare Management** (required only if applying to joint-degree program)

- Discuss your interest in nursing and health care management. How might Penn's coordinated dual-degree program in nursing and business help you to meet your goals?
  
- **Roy and Diana Vagelos Program in Life Sciences & Management** (required only if applying to joint-degree program)
  - What is intriguing to you about combining the study of life sciences with the study of management? We already know about many of your accomplishments, so please focus your thoughts upon where your interest in both science and management came from and where you see it going.
  
- **Seven-Year Bio-Dental Program** (required only if applying to joint-degree program)
  - Discuss your reasons for aspiring to a career in dental medicine. How might Penn's accelerated Bio-Dental Program help you to meet your professional goals?

### **2011/2012 Essay Topics**

- Answer the essay question on a separate sheet of paper, confining answers to one page in length (approximately 500 words). (Applicants to the Market and Social Systems Engineering major should skip this question and only answer the program-specific essay question on page 5.)
  - Considering both the specific undergraduate school or program to which you are applying and the broader University of Pennsylvania community, what academic, research, and/or extracurricular paths do you see yourself exploring at Penn?
  
- **Market and Social Systems Engineering (490)**
  - To be completed only by applicants to the Market and Social Systems Engineering major in the School of Engineering and Applied Science. Applicants should answer the essay question below instead of the application essay (question 7) on page 2.
  - a. Please write a brief essay describing your interests in modern networked information systems and technologies, such as the Internet, and their impact on society, whether in terms of

economics, communication, or the creation of beneficial content for society. Feel free to draw on examples from your own experiences as a user, developer, or student of technology.

Stanford University

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### 2010 Essay Topics

- **Required Essays**

- Candidates must respond to all three questions/topics. Responses must be at least 250 words but should not exceed the space provided in the Supplement.
- Stanford students are widely known to possess a sense of intellectual vitality. Tell us about an idea or an experience you have had that you find intellectually engaging.
- Virtually all of Stanford's undergraduates live on campus. What would you want your future roommate to know about you? Tell us something about you that will help your roommate—and us—know you better.
- Tell us what makes Stanford a good place for you

### 2011/2012 Essay Topics

- **Required Essays**

- Candidates must respond to all three questions/topics. Please respond to the following essay topics with up to 250 words.
  - 1. Stanford students possess intellectual vitality. Reflect on an idea or experience that has been important to your intellectual development.
  - 2. Virtually all of Stanford's undergraduates live on campus. What would you want your future roommate to know about you? Tell us something about you that will help your roommate—and us—know you better.
  - 3. What matters to you and why?

Yale University (2010)

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- **Required Essay**

- You have already told us about yourself in the Common Application, with its list of activities, the Short Answer, and the Personal Statement. While we leave the topic of your second essay entirely up to you, we encourage you to use this opportunity to tell us something that we could not learn from the rest of your application. Try to pick a topic that will convey some aspect of your experience or outlook that you would like us to understand better. Please keep your essay under 500 words. Your essay should be printed on a separate sheet of paper marked “Second Essay” with your full legal name and date of birth at the top, and enclosed with your completed Supplement.

### **Yale School of Management**

Source: [http://mba.yale.edu/news\\_events/CMS/Articles/7154.shtml](http://mba.yale.edu/news_events/CMS/Articles/7154.shtml)

**Work on Your Essays** Although our application won't go live until July, you can begin crafting your essays now. To help you do so, here are our essay topics for the upcoming year:

**Short Answers** Please answer each of the four questions below with a short paragraph of no more than 150 words. This is an opportunity to distill your core ideas, values, goals and motivations into a set of snapshots that help tell us who you are, where you are headed, and why. (150 words maximum per question)

1. What are your professional goals immediately after you receive your MBA?
2. What are your long-term career aspirations?
3. Why are you choosing to pursue an MBA and why now? (If you plan to use your MBA experience to make a significant change in the field or nature of your career, please tell us what you have done to prepare for this transition.)
4. What attracts you specifically to the Yale School of Management's MBA program?

**Personal Statements** Choose two (2) of the following topics and answer them in essay form. Please indicate the topic numbers at the beginning of your essays. (500 words maximum per essay)

1. What achievement are you most proud of and why?

2. What is the most difficult feedback you have received from another person or the most significant weakness you have perceived in yourself? What steps have you taken to address it and how will business school contribute to this process?
3. Describe an accomplishment that exhibits your leadership style. The description should include evidence of your leadership skills, the actions you took, and the impact you had on your organization.
4. An effective leader for business and society is one who is able to hear, understand and communicate with people from all segments of society. In order to educate such leaders, Yale SOM is committed to promoting diversity and creating a community that cultivates a wealth of perspectives. In this spirit, describe an instance when, as part of a team, you played a role in bringing together individuals with different values or viewpoints to achieve a common goal.
5. For Reapplicants (answer this topic plus one (1) of the other topics): What steps have you taken to improve your candidacy since your last application?

Additional Information (Optional) If any aspect of your candidacy needs further explanation, please provide any additional information that you would like the Admissions Committee to consider. (250 words maximum)

Essay Help

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Sample Admissions Essays (Scroll down to the bottom to find more)

[http://www.erraticimpact.com/html/sample\\_essay\\_harvard.htm](http://www.erraticimpact.com/html/sample_essay_harvard.htm)

Harvard Business School Essay Tips

<http://www.stacyblackman.com/2010/05/18/tuesday-tips-%E2%80%93-hbs-essay-questions/>

How to write an Ivy League admissions essay in 5 steps

<http://www.hopelesstoharvard.com/ivy-league-schools/college-admissions-essay/>

Choosing a College Essay Topic

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/essay-skills/109.html>

Tips for the Personal Essay Options on the Common Application

<http://collegeapps.about.com/od/essays/a/EssayPrompts.htm>



Application Essay Writing 101

<http://www.erraticimpact.com/cyberedit/index.html>

Tips for Writing Your Way Into Your Top Choice School

[http://collegeapps.about.com/od/essays/a/essay\\_tips.htm](http://collegeapps.about.com/od/essays/a/essay_tips.htm)

College Essay Style Tips

<http://collegeapps.about.com/od/essays/ss/College-Essay-Style-Tips.htm>

Essay Masters (Format, mechanics, general tips)

<http://www.essaymasters.net/help/college-application-essay-format>

Helpful Forum for Essay Ideas, Editing, Etc

<http://www.essayforum.com/>