

College Application Essay: Brainstorming

Step One: Generating Ideas

The most important part of your essay is the subject matter. To begin brainstorming a subject idea consider the following points. From brainstorming, you may find a subject you had not considered at first. Feel free to consult friends, teachers, parents, etc.

1. What are your major accomplishments, and why do you consider them accomplishments? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life)

_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does any attribute, quality, or skill distinguish you from everyone else? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

3. Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

4. What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

5. Of everything in the world, what would you most like to be doing right now? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

6. What are your strongest beliefs about the world, life, country, etc.? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5

7. What are your strongest traits(list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5

8. What are your weakest traits (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5

9. What have you done outside of the classroom (community or extra-curricular) that demonstrates qualities sought after by universities? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5

10. What are your dreams of the future? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5

11. Who do you most look up to, such as role models or people who have inspired you? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5
_____ 1 2 3 4 5

12. What are the three most important events in American history? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

13. What are local, national or world events or topics that you believe are most important for our society or for your life? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

14. What have you learned in or gained from school thus far? (list 3 and rate the impact on your life or importance)

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

_____ 1 2 3 4 5

Step Two: Narrow It Down

By looking through the items ranked as a 4 or 5, select three that seem the most meaningful as potential topics and answer the question about it.

Topic 1: _____

- Why is this important or significant? (impact on you, value to society, etc.)

Topic 2: _____

- Why is this important or significant? (impact on you, value to society, etc.)

Topic 3: _____

- Why is this important or significant? (impact on you, value to society, etc.)

You have now selected topics that were the strongest from a series of questions. Now you want to narrow those three topics to one strong candidate. It may not be your final essay, but it should reflect what would work well. In the following chart, place a check mark in the box for each topic if you can answer yes to the question on the left.

	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3
1. Have I selected a topic that describes something of personal importance to my life?			
2. Am I avoiding a gimmicky topic?			
3. Does my topic stay away from information listed elsewhere on my application?			
4. Will I be able to offer vivid supporting paragraphs to my essay topic?			
5. Can I fully answer the question asked of me?			
6. Will my topic keep the reader's interest from the first word?			
7. Is my topic unique?			
8. Am I being myself?			
9. Does my topic avoid hot-bottom issues that may offend the reader?			
10. Is my topic honest?			
Total Checks:			

Step Three: Choose a Topic

1. Topic from above: _____ (this may not necessarily be your essay topic)

2. Write the question from the previous handout that you would like to answer? If you choose the general question, then write your own question for it (this will help you later).
 Ex. Who is a person that has had a significant influence on you and describe that influence?

3. Write your thesis statement? (this is where you choose a final topic—Change the previous question around into a thesis statement)
 Ex. (Despite the fact that he lived a long time ago,) Abraham Lincoln is a strong influence in my life.

4. Audience: _____

Purpose: _____

Prompt: _____

Format: _____

