

Admissions Essay Examples Graduate Schools



Sample College Admissions Essays

We have prepared this booklet of actual essays written by current Harvard students who attended secondary schools in the UK (with names changed for anonymity) to work as practice with Harvard's content and approach. Because the university admissions processes in the US and the UK are so radically different, we have received requests for more sample essays and tips for writing them and hope they will be helpful.

Here is the official description of the personal essay requirement:

Please write an essay (250 words minimum) on a topic of your choice or on one of the topics listed below. The personal essay helps us become acquainted with you as a person and understand your interests, goals, life values, and other subjects. (Note: It will also demonstrate your ability to organize your thoughts and express yourself.)

1. Describe a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.
2. Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
3. Identify a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
4. Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (in an art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.
5. A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences will result in the admissions staff. Give us your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity of our college community, or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.
6. Topic of your choice.

Your essay for a US university might be the same one you would write for the UCAS system. We prefer to see the same material in your academic records and future photos, but also want to understand what makes you tick as a person. What are your hopes, dreams and fears?

Our advice is to think of two or three possible topics, write a quick first draft of each essay and then show them to your best friend, mother, teacher or anyone who knows you well. Ask that person if you write and generally come through in the essay and which one works best for you. This is not your final draft and please do not.

As you will see from the following sample essays, these students have written about learning to ski, a bible, cultural shock on coming to the UK, music, public service, and a favorite book. What will you write about?

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