

Top Essay Brainstorming Tips



The summer between junior and senior year is the prime time for college bound students to start brainstorming and writing their college application essays. The Common Application has already released the essay prompts for the 2018 admission season.

What does it take to write a good essay? First, it takes practice. Think of it as training for a marathon – it's a long process and shouldn't be rushed. Ideally, students should start on their essays the summer before senior year, but practicing your writing and brainstorming can be done even earlier.

When it comes to brainstorming, there are a number of things that students can do to get their creative juices flowing.

Read

Outside reading won't just help you have something to

list if a school's supplement includes a question about what you read in your spare time. Reading can also make you a better writer! It can also provide inspiration when brainstorming topics. When deciding what to write about for your personal statement, take time to reflect on some of your favorite books or publications. How did the storytelling impact you? Were you moved by a particular moment? Or did the bigger picture stick with you? Think about how the compelling elements from some of your favorite reads can translate into your personal statement, and how certain topics or moments from your life can amplify those storytelling methods. Which leads us to the next tip...

Pinpoint Meaningful Moments

What events or moments in your life have made you the person you are today? College want to see a slice of your life in your college application essays, so when brainstorming topics for your essay it's important to think about a pivotal moment or experience to write about. Think less about the prompt and more about yourself. What events stick out to you? What experience was most meaningful to you? It's important to remember that meaningful moments don't have to be

particularly grand. It can be as simple as the struggle of reconciling your cultural views with those of an older generation or how reading a powerful book shaped your approach to a conflict. Reflect on your experiences and create a list of those that you think would be interesting to write about. Take some time away from the list and revisit it a few days later to see what ideas still hold up and which should be reconsidered.

Consider the Point You Want to Make

If you had two minutes with the dean of admission, what would you want to tell him or her? Is it how your views on the world have evolved over the past few years? Or how an experience outside of the classroom has influenced your approach to your education? When brainstorming it's important to consider the point you want to make with your topic. You're not just telling a story with your essay – you're also reflecting on who you are as a person and why who you are today is a good-fit for the institution to which you're applying. Often, identifying the central theme of your essay and working backwards to identify a moment or event that

demonstrates that message is an effective brainstorming strategy.

Write

It may seem a little inefficient to start writing before you even have a topic picked out, but writing can actually be a really effective brainstorming tool. Just like reading can provide inspiration and improve your writing, so can writing! Things like journaling can help you flesh out potential essay topics and also help you become a better writer. Take some time each morning to journal or just write a quick list of things that have happened or are important to you. After a few days revisit those entries. Does anything stick out? Do you want to elaborate on certain events or feelings? If so, start writing about them! Creating a draft of some loose ideas doesn't mean you're committing to that topic. Write and then revisit it. If you don't like it, delete it and start over. If there's something there you do like – revise it! Writing can help spark creativity, and revisiting your writing can help you see where you need to improve.

It's never too early to start thinking about what you want to write about when it comes time to start working

on your college applications. Things like reading and writing can help set younger students on the path to becoming better writers and story tellers long before they need to start on their college applications, and brainstorming meaningful moments and what students want to tell admissions officers can help rising seniors get a head start on their essay writing this summer

The college application season is right around the corner! Need help with your applications or deciding where to apply? Contact us today for more information on our college counseling services for rising high school senior. By ivywise