

The group essay party

Taken from **College Express** -

<https://www.collegexpress.com/articles-and-advice/admission/articles/application-essay-clinic/5-fun-and-unique-ways-brainstorm-your-college-essays/>

Supplies:

A group of friends (I suggest five or more)

Lined paper

Pens or pencils

Printed college application essay prompts

Timer

This group activity is a way to be inspired by other's words and have fun exploring your own.

Print out some essay prompts. Include both the [Common Application prompts](#) and some prompts directly from colleges, like ones from the [University of Chicago](#). Create two piles in front of the writers: a Common Application prompt pile and a college prompt pile. Place the prompts face down. Writers must choose one from each pile. They cannot change the prompts, but they may choose which to write about first. The challenge is the writers must find *some* way to address the prompts, even if it seems silly or far fetched and even if they would never choose it in real life.

Set the timer for five to 10 minutes and have writers write anything that comes to mind. Then repeat for the second prompt. When time is up, everyone should read their essays aloud or pass their papers around the circle. The reader's goal is to comment only on the good, like a line that stands out or a clever angle. Then, the writers can take the good from this brainstorm game and perhaps run with it for draft. (You can also talk to your teacher about doing this activity as a class. The teacher can collect and distribute nameless papers randomly, so only they know which paper belongs to which student.)

Obviously, you will be able to choose the essay prompt that fits you when the time comes, but this game fosters out-of-the-box thinking by forcing you to consider questions you might have discarded otherwise. And you may be surprised—your least favorite prompt may inspire your best essay.

You Questions = red

Outside the box/Creative Questions = green

Intellectual = blue

Common App = black

How is the person you know yourself to be different from the person your family and friends know you to be?

The Admission Committee would like to know some of the things that you are thinking, laughing, or talking about at this time in your life.

We'd like to know a bit more about your world. Describe the world you come from, for example your family, clubs, school, community, city, or town. How has that world shaped your dreams and aspirations?

Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

What is the hardest part of being a teenager now? What's the best part? What advice would you give a younger sibling or friend?

We know you lead a busy life, full of activities, many of which are required of you. Tell us about something you do simply for the pleasure of it.

If you could tell your parents one thing to help them understand you better, what would it be?

What's your favorite word,
and why?

“You are required to spend the next year of your life in either the past or the future. What year would you travel to and why?”

“If your name were an acronym, what would it stand for and how would it reflect your strengths and personality?”

If you were president of the United States for a day, what one policy - whether serious or semi-serious - would you implement? Why?

We can be defined not only by what we choose to keep but what we choose to discard. Write about something you reluctantly chose to discard and why this was a difficult choice.

Look out any window in your home. What would you change about what you see?

Advancements in technology may benefit humanity or may come at the risk of doing harm. Identify a technological advancement that you regard as an example of this dilemma and discuss your thoughts about future implications.

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?

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?

Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

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.

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.

Leadership is more than a position. Describe at least one quality of leadership that you have learned in high school either through direct experience or by observation of another leader.

As you prepare to join a new school community, reflect on your role as a community member throughout the past four years. What legacy do you hope to leave behind?

Our curriculum teaches students empathy, informed debate, and critical thinking. Tell us what book or piece of literature you believe is important for the entire class of 2023 to read. Why?

We challenge our students to 'be comfortable with being uncomfortable'. Tell us about a time in high school that you felt outside of your comfort zone and the resolution.