



The Common Application Board of Directors is pleased to announce the 2013-14 essay prompts. They are presented below along with the instructions that will accompany them. While not specified here, the online application will make clear that the word limit will be enforced.

The new prompts and the written guidance around them are the culmination of two years of discussion about the role writing plays in a holistic selection process. The Board relied heavily on the advice of the 15 counselors who serve on its Outreach Advisory Committee. Together, these colleagues have decades of experience advising students from every academic, social, cultural, and economic background. As they considered the topics our members suggested, they worked diligently to ensure that all applicants, regardless of background or access to counseling, would have the chance to tell their unique stories.

The Board of Directors thanks everyone who provided constructive and collegial feedback over the last several months. We are excited about the possibilities these prompts present for thoughtful and creative expression. The measure of their success will be how well they help our member institutions make informed decisions. We will revisit the essay prompts each year, and we will look to our members for input regarding their effectiveness.

Instructions. The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. *What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores?* Choose the option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. Use the full range if you need it, but don't feel obligated to do so. (The application won't accept a response shorter than 250 words.)

- Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
- Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.