

# The Free School

---



**How to write a winner essay for  
college and scholarship applications**

**[library@thefreeschool.education](mailto:library@thefreeschool.education)**

# Meet the School's star scholar:



[gofundme](#)

[My CV](#)

FEATURED SCHOLAR



[massjustin1@gmail.com](mailto:massjustin1@gmail.com)

**David Justin Bazia Woodayan**

MASSJ71

[FACEBOOK](#)

[www.thefreeschool.education/scholars-page.html](http://www.thefreeschool.education/scholars-page.html)



[www.thefreeschool.education/david.html](http://www.thefreeschool.education/david.html)

# What is a college application essay?

Most highly selective colleges require applicants to submit an essay as a part of their application as do some scholarship providers.

You should read the guidelines carefully to determine whether the essay requires you to write a paper that is a:

1. Scholarly discussion about a particular topic (*e.g.* migration), or a
2. Personal statement about you, or a
3. Combination of scholarly discussion and a discussion about yourself.

# What is a college application essay? (continued)

This presentation only discusses 1. “A scholarly discussion about a particular topic (e.g. migration).”

This YouTube presentation will assist you if the essay guidelines require you to write “A personal statement about you”. The Princeton Review article offers advice to aid you to prepare a personal statement essay.

[www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/college-essay](http://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/college-essay)

## The Free School



How to write a motivation letter or a motivation statement for college and scholarship applications

The Free School Library presentation

[library@thefreeschool.education](mailto:library@thefreeschool.education)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTwotZdypsM>

# **There are numerous essay formats**

**This presentation does not offer a ‘template approach’ that shows you how to write an essay that is guaranteed to succeed. The content and format of college and scholarship essay application guidelines varies between institutions. You should always abide by the unique guidelines published by each institution. There is no one model for you to master.**

# There are numerous essay formats

There are three ways of classifying essay guidelines:

**1. Some instructions require you to answer one question only.**

Some guidelines ask to discuss one or more of:

**2. Others require you to answer multiple questions.**

1. Personal experiences
2. Issues specific to the college that you apply to
3. Issues about society/the environment

**Some guidelines ask you to write in short answer format. Other guidelines ask you to use the traditional essay format: introduction, body, conclusion. Some guidelines offer you a choice of questions and others do not list optional questions.**

# Essay question examples

## Essay questions that are personal to you:

Choose a person or persons that you admire and explain why you admire that person.

Choose a book that has affected you deeply and explain why it has had this effect on you.

**Adapted from** <http://finaid.med.ufl.edu/scholarships/writing-the-scholarship-essay/>

Human beings have a creative side that tends to shine most when we are truly invested in the world around us. Describe a situation when you responded effectively to a particular need and found yourself at your creative best.

<http://www.bc.edu/admission/undergrad/process/freshman/essays.html>

# Essay question examples

## Essay questions that are specific to the college:

Which aspects of Tufts' curriculum or undergraduate experience prompt your application? In short: "Why Tufts?"

<http://admissions.tufts.edu/apply/essay-questions/>

Why do you want to attend this school?

<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/application-essay-topics>

# Essay question examples

## Essay questions about society or the environment

How are apples and oranges supposed to be compared? Possible answers involve, but are not limited to, statistics, chemistry, physics, linguistics, and philosophy.

<https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/apply/essay/past-essay-questions>

“It’s not easy being green” was a frequent lament of Kermit the Frog. Discuss.

<https://admissions.dartmouth.edu/apply/choose-your-path/early-decision/essays>

# Multiple answer discussions

Question 1: There is a Quaker saying: “Let your life speak.” Describe the environment in which you were raised – your family, home, neighborhood, or community – and how it influenced the person you are today. (200–250 words)

Please respond to one of the following questions (200-250 words).

A) Nelson Mandela believed that "what counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead." Describe a way in which you have made or hope to make a difference.

B) It's cool to be smart. Tell us about the subjects or ideas that excite your intellectual curiosity.

Adapted from <http://admissions.tufts.edu/apply/essay-questions/>

# **6 essay writing suggestions**

**Core message**

**Distinguish yourself**

**Research your college**

**Spelling and grammar**

**Customize to meet criteria**

**Originality and signature-style**

# Core message of this presentation

“The best way to tell your story is to write a personal, thoughtful **essay** about something that has meaning for you. Be honest and genuine, and your unique qualities will shine through. **Admissions** officers have to read an unbelievable number of **college essays**, most of which are forgettable.”

<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/college-essay>

# Scholarly discussion essays: tips

- If the guidelines do not mandate the structure, then you should include a brief introduction and a brief conclusion. Find a way to summarise your argument in a fresh way in these two short paragraphs.
- At least 80% of your word count/discussion takes place in the middle paragraphs - the body of your essay.
- Discuss one strong theme only in each discussion paragraph
- Offer an example in each discussion paragraph to illustrate your point
- Write cumulatively - build your grand argument/story from start to finish
- Use a formal English for Academic Purposes writing style unless another format is requested, such as writing using humour.

Further reading: [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/apessay\\_tips.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/apessay_tips.html)

# Examples of mandatory essay criteria

The guidelines may ask you to adhere to criteria such as:

- Write an essay using English for Academic Purposes
- Conform to maximum and/or minimum word limits
- Engage with certain theories and/or scholarly theorists
- Offer your viewpoint on specific topics (*e.g.* global warming)
- Use an academic referencing style such as Harvard or Chicago

# Customize your essays

**Never** submit the same essay twice or use a template formula. If your essay looks general it will most likely be ignored.

Be sure that your application meets all mandatory criteria stated in the guidelines. Use keywords that explicitly make it clear to your readers that you are addressing these criteria. Place the recipient's name, title, contacts and organization name at the top of your essay if this is permitted.

**Try to differentiate your essay by displaying some degree of originality with structure, format and content.**

**Modestly distinguish yourself. What is your core message? What is your worldview on the set topic?**



**Supports  
equality**



**Global  
outlook**



**Art is  
truth**



**Promotes  
Innovation**

**There are many talented scholars. Why are you worthy?**

**College and scholarships administrators see hundreds of excellent essays each year that look similar. Distinguish yourself by taking a firm stand on a particular topic and display some originality.**

# Research the sponsor (continued)

You may opt to customize your essay to show that you have researched the sponsor, if the guidelines allow this. Be subtle. You should provide evidence of a connection between your essay discussion and the sponsor's:

- Public image
- Official mandate
- Institutional values
- Current operations
- Organizational structure
- Historical achievements

# Always research the institutions that you apply to.

## Example: The New School



**Private not-for-profit research intensive university**

# Are some topics ‘secretly’ favored?

If you are applying to study at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, your essay might have more chance of success if you focus on issues that concern technology, especially if you are applying for a B.Sc, M.Sc or a Ph.D in science.

Some informed scholars argue that certain institutions favor essays that discuss topics and defend principles that align with the values of their institution. If you are applying at The New School, your letter may have more chance of success if you focus on issues that concern social justice or fashion.

**You must always follow the guidelines provided by the sponsor.**

Some guidelines do not allow you to choose the topic or stance that you must discuss.

**Write from your heart. Be honest. Be passionate.**

—  
Put forward an argument that shows an awareness of the needs of humankind, rather than focussing on yourself and your own opinions.

It is advisable to write a piece that promotes some form of positive change or an outlook that will make society a better place at the local, national, regional or global level.

## Altruistic objective



# Excellent spelling and grammar

Poor spelling and grammar is one of the most common reasons why scholarship and college application essays are not successful.

Scholarship and college administrators understand that many applicants come from non-English speaking backgrounds. It is natural that the 'voice' of an essay may sound 'foreign' and that small spelling and grammar errors may creep in.

It is not acceptable to have large amounts of spelling and grammar errors or essays that are difficult to comprehend. You want to convince your sponsor that you are a hard-working, conscientious scholar who has excellent attention-to-detail.

Send a copy of your draft essay to fluent-speakers of the English language. Consult free resources such as Google Docs spellcheck and [www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com)

# Use the English language spelling of your sponsor's country

American English	British English	Other <i>e.g.</i> Canadian
<b><u>Spelling:</u></b>	<b><u>Spelling:</u></b>	<b><u>Spelling:</u></b>
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>Center</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>Center</b>
<b><u>Vocabulary:</u></b>	<b><u>Vocabulary:</u></b>	<b><u>Vocabulary:</u></b>
<b>College education</b>	<b>Higher-education</b>	<b>Post-secondary studies</b>

Microsoft Word allows you to use a spellchecker for regional English *e.g.* Australian English. Try to arrange for a fluent speaker of the English language to check the spelling, grammar and vocabulary of your draft application essay. For global applications *e.g.* the United Nations, it is acceptable to use American English or British English.

# Winner examples

Using Google searches, it is possible to find examples of excellent essays. This includes examples of essays that have been successful. Check the details of who is listing an example of a good essay and decide for yourself if the source is independent and credible. If the example is featured on a college's website, then you can trust that this is a good example of what that particular college may seek out in a good essay.

We have included a very small list of websites that show examples of how to write a winner essay. We argue that the only websites that you should consult are those that are published by the college that you are writing the essay for. A winner essay submitted to Yale University in 2016 might not be a winner essay at Harvard University in the same year for the same student applying for the same degree. Admissions Officers evaluate different criteria and these may change from year-to-year.

Johns Hopkins University (2016),

<https://apply.jhu.edu/apply/essays-that-worked/>

Boston College (2016),

<http://www.bc.edu/admission/undergrad/processes/freshman/essays.html>

# Comprehensive applications

These YouTube presentations may assist you if you need to prepare a detailed package of written papers in addition to the application essay.

## How to apply for Graduate School

The Free School Library presentation

library@thefreeschool.education



## How to apply for a scholarship



The Free School Library presentation

library@thefreeschool.education

The Free School. Applying for Graduate School MBA PhD



The Free School

Subscribe 20

The Free School. Scholarships.



The Free School

Subscribe 20

# Further reading

San Diego City College (2016), Tips for scholarship applications and personal essays, <://[www.sdcity.edu/Portals/o/CMS\\_Editors/MESA/PDFs/ScholarshipGuide.pdf](http://www.sdcity.edu/Portals/o/CMS_Editors/MESA/PDFs/ScholarshipGuide.pdf)>. Accessed 18 November 2016.

University of North Carolina (2016), Application essays, <<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/application-essays/>> Accessed 18 November 2016.

**[library@thefreeschool.education](mailto:library@thefreeschool.education)**

Please share this presentation

**A pdf version of this slideshow is available at**

**[www.thefreeschool.education/scholarships.html](http://www.thefreeschool.education/scholarships.html)**

