

Sample college application essay questions

Howard University: Howard University is interested in you as a person, as well as how you express your thoughts. Please submit a 500-word essay describing how you would contribute to the Howard University legacy.

Pomona College: Reinvent your high school. What is essential? What would you change?

Florida State University: How has your family history, culture, or environment influenced who you are?

New York University: Select a creative work—a novel, a film, a musical piece, a painting, or other work of art—that has influenced the way you view the world, or the way you view yourself. Discuss the impact the work has had on you. (We are more interested in how the work has affected you rather than reading a detailed plot summary or a description of the work.)

Fordham University: Discuss a political, social, or cultural issue that has had an impact on society and discuss why it is important to you.

Northwestern University: An old expression says, “What is right is not always popular, and what is popular is not always right.” Give an example of a time when you made a choice that was not popular but you felt was right. Why did you make this choice? What happened as a result?

Rhodes College: What risks have you taken in your life? What were the circumstances and the results? How have you benefited from risk taking?

Common Application: Choose one of the topics.

1. Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and describe its impact on you.
2. Discuss some issues of personal, local, national, or international concern and their importance to you.
3. Indicate a person who has been a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
4. Describe a character in fiction, a historical character, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you and describe that influence.
5. A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that illustrated the importance of diversity to you.

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Other commonly asked essay questions:

If you could travel through time and interview a prominent figure in the arts, politics, religion, or science, whom would you choose, and why?

Tell us about a teacher who has had a significant impact on your intellectual growth, and discuss that impact.

Ask and answer the one important question that you wish we had asked.

Explain why a particular day in the recent past continues to be important to you.