TELLING YOUR STORY

2018 QuestBridge
National College Admissions Conference

AGENDA

1. Your Complete Story
   Explore all of the opportunities you have to tell your story throughout your college application.

2. Five Essential Essay Strategies
   Understand how to write an effective essay that will capture the attention of admissions officers.

3. Activity: Sample Essays
   Tie everything together with real-life examples.

WHERE TO TELL YOUR STORY

Make use of all available space to explain your story!

Use the entire application to tell YOUR COMPLETE STORY

TWO SAMPLE STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Applicant A</th>
<th>Applicant B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Information</td>
<td>A. Smith, 22 Main Street</td>
<td>B. Jones, 431 Center Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Information</td>
<td>GPA: 3.9</td>
<td>SAT: 1370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>Varsity Football</td>
<td>Key Club President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Essays</td>
<td>My piano recital</td>
<td>My community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Statement</td>
<td>My summer service trip</td>
<td>My passion for robotics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TWO SAMPLE STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Applicant A</th>
<th>Applicant B (+ His Story)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Information</td>
<td>A. Smith, 22 Main Street</td>
<td>B. Jones, 431 Center Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Information</td>
<td>GPA: 3.9</td>
<td>SAT: 1370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only three AP classes offered at high school; took them all and studied for two additional AP tests on my own</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>Varsity Football</td>
<td>Key Club President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babysit siblings while mom is at work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work part-time to help pay bills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Essays</td>
<td>My piano recital</td>
<td>My community service tutoring peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few students from my school go to college</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Statement</td>
<td>My summer service trip</td>
<td>My passion for robotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started robotics club in underfunded HS</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USING THE ESSAY

• A section of the application that you have complete control over.
• A place to show your unique achievements.
• A place to showcase your intellectual curiosity and interests.
• An opportunity for you to show the reader how certain circumstances or obstacles have shaped you.

Keep in mind:
You want the reader to feel like they’ve met you.

When you write, keep in mind these
FIVE ESSENTIAL ESSAY STRATEGIES

#1

CHOOSE A TOPIC ONLY YOU CAN WRITE ABOUT

1. **Think of a broad topic.**
   Something that immediately comes to mind when you think of the influential parts of your life (e.g., Family).

2. **Specify a circumstance about that topic.**
   The situation that makes this broad topic stand out to you as influential (e.g., Living in a single-parent household).

3. **Hone in on your unique point.**
   The part of your circumstance that makes your story uniquely your own (e.g., Gained greater independence since mom works long hours and learned how to cook for own family with a limited budget).

COMMONLY USED TOPICS

The Big Issue: I believe that world peace is the most important...
Tales of My Successes: I’m the student body president and...
The Sport Essay: Football taught me the importance of teamwork...
The Autobiography: I was born on February 22, 1996...
The Significant Relationship: My mom/dad/boyfriend changed my life...
Moving: I attended three different middle schools...
The Trip: I had to adjust to a different culture in my trip to...
The Academic Risk: I took all APs and risked not getting a 4.0...

Adapted from Harry Bauld’s On Writing the College Application Essay

HIGHLIGHT WHAT’S IMPORTANT TO YOU

Describe how you’ve become the person you are today.
• Have you overcome any particular challenges?
• Are there specific factors that have shaped you?
• What piques your intellectual curiosity?

Keep in mind:
Feel comfortable sharing your background!
#2
DEMONSTRATE EMOTIONAL MATURITY

If you choose to write about some of your obstacles in life, use a mature, composed tone.
- Avoid overly negative or critical language.
- Move in a positive direction.
- Show personal growth.

#3
FOCUS ON YOUR PASSIONS – NOT JUST YOUR CAREER

“The Utilitarian Essay

“Attending X College will prepare me to get into the medical school of my choice, become a doctor, and support my parents financially...”

A Stronger Approach

“While my lab partner watched, I slit open the frog’s belly and for the first time examined its tiny, intricate organs. Instead of being grossed out, I was fascinated, and my passion for science – particularly biology – was ignited. This fascination led me to seek out advanced summer biology courses at my local community college. As the youngest person in the classroom...”

#4
REMEMBER THE ADMISSIONS OFFICER’S PERSPECTIVE
HOW WE CAN GET TO KNOW YOU

Writing skills  Broader context
Personality & character  Intellectual interests
Your essay

#5
EDIT AND PROOFREAD. REPEAT!

PROOFREADING ESSENTIALS

Before
• Divide your thoughts into coherent paragraphs.

During
• Read drafts out loud to yourself.
• Capitalize the pronoun “I.”
• Use natural-sounding words.
• Avoid cliché phrases.

After
• Get feedback from peers, teachers, and parents.
• Avoid editing out your unique voice.

AS YOU MOVE FORWARD

Start seeking inspiration now.
Ask teachers for feedback.
Leave time for multiple drafts.
Let your voice shine through.

Activity:
SAMPLE ESSAYS

1. Read the sample essays.
2. Write a one-sentence summary.
3. Strategize ways to improve.