

# Writing College Application Essays

## Writing Exercise

1) List words/phrases that come to mind when you think of the life you have lived up until now. In one column list the obstacles or challenges that have shaped you. In the other column list the triumphs, pivotal moments or successes that you've experienced. Be as specific as possible—whatever words **first** come to mind when you think of your life.

**challenges**

**triumphs**

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2) List **6 people who have been significant** in your life—for good or bad. Think of family, friends, co-workers, significant others, pets, even someone you only encountered once.

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3) List **4 significant life events** that have shaped who you are or are becoming.

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4) List **3-6 dreams or goals** you have for your future.

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5) List **3 situations** when you have felt like an outsider to a group.

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# Brainstorming for your personal statement topic

■ Your admissions essay can be a **HUGE** factor in your acceptance to college.

## Sample Essay Prompt

### Arizona Universities' Freshman Personal Statement

A personal statement is our best means of getting to know you and your best means of putting your academic performance and activities in the context of your life. There are no "wrong" answers. When you write your personal statement, tell us about those aspects of your life that are not evident from your academic record. Because personal statements are brief, they usually focus on one aspect of a student's life. For example, you could focus on a character-defining moment, a cultural awareness, a challenge faced, family background or cultural heritage, individual talents, academic commitment, or extracurricular activities. Tell us what you would like us to know about you in considering you for our University

## Brainstorming Questions

What makes you or your family unique?

Have you faced any challenges or overcome any obstacles that have made you stronger? If so what were they?

What experiences outside of school have influenced your life in and out of the classroom?

What skills do you have (leadership, speaking, writing, etc)?

What book has influenced you most? Why?

What was it like growing up in your town and going to your high school?

Who in your life has influenced you? How? Why?

What impact do you want to make on your community or the world?

Has your race, ethnicity, culture, politics, or religion affected you in positive or negative ways? How?

Have you struggled due to socioeconomic status, physical ability or household situations? How?

Name:

School:



## My Personal Statement Topics

Use this chart to list your topic ideas for your application personal statements or essays. You should list at least three potential topics, then discuss them with a teacher, your counselor, your family, or a GEAR UP Coordinator.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

# Organize your personal statement *(one method)*

- Spend some time thinking about how you will organize your story.

Tell us what you're going to say...	<b>Topic or main idea</b>
Say it...	Supporting Paragraph 1
	Supporting Paragraph 2
	Supporting Paragraph 3
Remind us of what you just said...	<b>Conclusion</b>

## After you've written your draft, ASK:

- Did you **answer the question(s)** posed in the essay prompt in the application?
- Does this statement **describe YOU** and point out your best qualities?
- Did you discuss how this experience has **transformed** you?
- Did you discuss how this event **relates to college** or your future?
- If you have **experienced significant hardships** in your life, did you describe them in your essay?

## Organize your personal statement *(another method)*

- This format might make more sense to you or fit your story better.

**Event**

**Outcome**

**What I learned from it**

### After you've written your draft, ASK:

- Did you **answer the question(s)** posed in the essay prompt in the application?
- Does this statement **describe YOU** and point out your best qualities?
- Did you discuss how this experience has **transformed** you?
- Did you discuss how this event **relates to college** or your future?
- If you have **experienced significant hardships** in your life, did you describe them in your essay?