

# Sharing Your Story: Tips on writing your college essay

So allowing yourself plenty of time is crucial in this process. And then brainstorming. So for some of you, you might already be in the midst of writing your [essay water resources management](#), or the Common App, or for these different universities. And maybe you saw the prompt, and immediately it was like a light bulb in your head. And you thought, OK, I know exactly what I want to write about. I know the examples in my brain. I have it all formulated. I just need to put it on paper. And so, for a lot of people, unfortunately that's not how it works. And so it's important to brainstorm. So when I'm saying brainstorm, I mean, look at all of the prompts that are offered. Think of all of the possible things that you could do to help formulate something that would be an intriguing essay. It could be something crazy, right? So brainstorming means you're putting the good, the bad, the ugly, any sort of idea on paper. And then from there, you sift through it, and you really say, OK, what are my best options out of this? So brainstorming is very crucial as well, especially if you're not really sure what route to go. And we're going to talk a little bit more about that here in just a second. OK. So choosing a prompt, as I mentioned before, a lot of universities, especially the ones that will accept the Common Application, you have the choice to select what prompt you want. The first and most important question to ask yourself, before you choose anything, is what do you want to write about? So if I were talking to each of you individually right now, and I said, what do you want me to know about you? What is the most important thing that you want me to know about you, as an outsider? What would you say? What is the most important part of your identity or your experience that you think is important to share with the folks on the other side who are reading your application, OK? So what do you want to write about? Because the purpose of this prompt is to help you reflect on something that matters to you, right? So it shouldn't be something that's forced. It shouldn't be something that you feel obligated to write about. It should come naturally, because it should be something that hits close to home, OK? So the essay is crucially important, because it is the only part of your application that actually allows you to speak in your own voice about whatever matters to you. So reading applications-- I read a lot of applications every day-- I will see all of your activities. I will see your leadership roles. I will read what your teachers and your counselors have to say about you in their recommendation letters. I will see your grades. I will see your transcript, right? So that's all black and white on paper. The chance for you to actually show me in your own words who you are, not how someone else sees you, or not how you perform on a piece of paper, is through the essay. So it really is an important part and piece of your application material. So keeping that in mind, it is very important that you choose something that you care about, because your writing will be easier, and it will come across on paper. So when I'm reading an essay, usually I can tell within the first couple of sentences, if not the first paragraph, if you're really passionate and you really care about what you're saying in that essay.