

# College Essays



*What's the Right Filter?*

# Know Your Audience

- ✓ You have *moments* to make an impression
  - ✓ Don't assume readers share your *faith background*
  - ✓ Don't assume readers share your definition of *normal*
  - ✓ Colleges are places for *diversity* (cultural, ideas, backgrounds, etc.)
- 

# What's the right filter?

- ✓ Highlights strengths
- ✓ Filtered to make you look good, but it's still you

- ✗ Highlights imperfection
- ✗ Unflattering
- ✗ Repulses audience
- ✗ You're not clearly visible
- ✗ Off topic / focus on others
- ✗ Too much or too little details will dim your story
- ✗ Too many embellishments
- ✗ Inaccurate
- ✗ Fake / insincere voice

# Caution

These things **contaminate** your essay

- ✓ Too harsh (on yourself and on others)
- ✓ Overly focused on the pain
- ✓ Can't find YOU
- ✓ Poor mental health
- ✓ No transformation / No victory



# Make it Great

## How to write about conflicts/setbacks

- ✓ Find PURPOSE in your obstacles
- ✓ Perspective / distance
- ✓ Blessing in disguise
- ✓ Content with your current life



# Common Mistakes

- ✓ **Scope is too big**
  - ✓ Find a theme and stick to it
- ✓ **Share cool stories about other people**
  - ✓ Summer camp, Mission Trips
- ✓ **Rant**
  - ✓ Comes across as negative, complaining, bitter
- ✓ **Focus too much on a weakness**
  - ✓ You're giving colleges ammo to reject you

# Apply Texas-Topic A

Tell us your story. What unique opportunities or challenges have you experienced throughout your high school career that have shaped who you are today?

**TIP: Use a narrative structure.**

✓ Beginning, conflict, turning point, end

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## **KEY WORD: "unique"**

- ✓ Choose an experience that is unique to you OR write about a common thing in a unique way.

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## **FOCUS: Journey before destination**

- ✓ Tale of transformation
- ✓ Redemptive life story

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## **TIME TO SHINE**

- ✓ Be someone the colleges want
- ✓ KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

# Common App Essays

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? (#3: 21.1%)

# Common App Essays

A vintage camera with a lens and a smartphone lying on a dark surface. The camera is positioned in the center, with its lens pointing towards the viewer. The smartphone is lying horizontally in front of the camera. The background is dark and textured.

3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

# Common App Essays

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others. (#2: 23.7%)

6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

# Common App Essays



7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design. (#1: 24.1%)

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## Apply Texas

✓ Length: 500-750 words

## Common Application

✓ Length: 500-650 words