

**Our Lady of Lourdes**  
**Summer Writing Assignment 2022**  
**In-Coming Grade 12**

**Purpose:** to complete a well-written essay for a college application.

**Enclosed in packet:** Common Application essay topics 2022-23

Tip sheets for writing essays

Examples of “Essays that Worked”

**Assignment:** Over the course of the summer, each junior is to produce a finished College Application Essay to be handed in for a grade on the first day back in September. The final essay should be 500-650 words.

If, by chance, a senior is not scheduled for a first semester English class, he or she should submit the essay packet to Mrs. Katz on the first day back.

**Instructions:** Choose one of the Common Application topics to work on during break.

Read over the tips sheets.

Write a first draft of the essay.

Proofread and edit your draft.

Write a clean final draft.

Submit final draft on the first day of school.

The final draft **MUST** be typed (size 12 Times New Roman) and double spaced.

*Essays will be graded and scores will be used in the calculation of the first marking period grade.*

**Below is the full set of Common App essay prompts for 2022-2023.**

- 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. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?**
- 4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?**
- 5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.**
- 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?**
- 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.**

## College Essay Writing Tips

### Write an Effective Application Essay

A great application essay will present a vivid, personal, and compelling view of yourself, using your own voice, to the admissions staff. It will round out the rest of your application and help you stand out from other applicants. The essay is one of the only parts of your application over which you have complete control, so take the time to do a good job. Check out these tips before you begin.

#### Do's

##### Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal

Your essay must prove a single point or thesis. The reader must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. Try having someone read just your introduction to see what he thinks your essay is about. Essays that try to be too comprehensive end up sounding watered-down. Remember, it's not about telling the committee what you've done—they can pick that up from your list of activities—instead, it's about showing them who you are.

##### Use Your OWN Voice!

Do not try to write in a style that is not who you are. Write in a voice that is natural and clear. Be yourself and let your best self shine through your writing style.

##### Prove It and Be HONEST

Develop your main idea with vivid and specific facts, events, quotations, examples, and reasons. There's a big difference between simply stating a point of view and letting an idea unfold in the details:

**Okay:** "I like to be surrounded by people with a variety of backgrounds and interests"

**Better:** "During that night, I sang the theme song from Casablanca with a baseball coach who thinks he's Bogie, discussed Marxism with a little old lady, and heard more than I ever wanted to know about some woman's gall bladder operation."

##### Be Specific

Avoid clichéd, generic, and predictable writing by using vivid and specific details.

**Okay:** "I want to help people. I have gotten so much out of life through the love and guidance of my family, I feel that many individuals have not been as fortunate; therefore, I would like to expand the lives of others."

**Better:** "My Mom and Dad stood on plenty of sidelines 'til their shoes filled with water or their fingers turned white, or somebody's golden retriever signed his name on their

coats in mud. I think that kind of commitment is what I'd like to bring to working with fourth graders."

## **Don'ts**

### **Don't Tell Them What You Think They Want to Hear**

Most admissions officers read plenty of essays about the charms of their university, the evils of terrorism, and the personal commitment involved in being a doctor. Bring something new to the table, not just what you think they want to hear.

### **Don't Write a Resume**

Don't include information that is found elsewhere in the application. Your essay will end up sounding like an autobiography, travelogue, or laundry list. Yawn.

"During my junior year, I played first singles on the tennis team, served on the student council, maintained a B+ average, traveled to France, and worked at a cheese factory."

### **Don't Use 50 Words When Five Will Do** - Eliminate unnecessary words.

**Okay:** "Over the years it has been pointed out to me by my parents, friends, and teachers—and I have even noticed this about myself, as well—that I am not the neatest person in the world."

**Better:** "I'm a slob."

### **Don't Forget to Proofread**

Typos and spelling or grammatical errors are interpreted as carelessness or just bad writing. Don't rely on your computer's spell check. It can miss spelling errors like the ones below.

- "After I graduate *form* high school, I plan to work for a nonprofit organization during the summer."
- "From that day on, Daniel was my best *fried*."

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty.

Essays that worked from

Connecticut College

[www.conncoll.edu/admission/apply/essays-that-worked](http://www.conncoll.edu/admission/apply/essays-that-worked)

Olivia Rabbitt '16

Bishop Feehan High School, Attleboro, Mass.

The bright blue eyes that alight with unfettered curiosity on the burgeoning bulletin board are not only my own. Nor are the ears that listen raptly to the hum of student life and the gentle sing-song of our tour guide's voice. Almost in tandem, my companion and I tear ourselves from the vivid vignette of college life and return with unmatched strides to the vast expanses of the campus. As the tour continues, I am neither surprised by the eager questions my companion poses - "Where's the baseball field?" - nor by the heightened interest painted so clearly across his face. Wandering amongst the tall stone buildings, I appreciate for the first time how much this visit means to my constant companion, my father.

Growing up in a home overflowing with seven children and two working parents, my father spilled out into the "real world" at age eighteen. He took with him his younger brother, an impossibly solid work ethic, and a Chevy Caprice. Neither of my grandparents were fazed by their son's moving out of the house so abruptly; their expectation had always been clear: go to school, learn the basics, then work. The notion of higher education never crossed my father's strong mind until years after his high school graduation. To hear him describe his adolescence is almost like hearing a fable told from the perspective of the Prodigal Son.

With the outspoken and unyielding influence of my mother, my father decided that none of his children would make the same foolish mistakes that he had made. Learning for learning's sake was always the focus in our home. From our nightly story *The Hobbit*, to endless explorations in the woods, to gardening, to building, my brothers and I were never bored. While it was from my mother that I first learned to question and explore, it was my father who was able to capture my inquisitive spirit and help ground me in the practical.

Perhaps because he was a self-sufficient teen, my father exudes a quiet self-assuredness that can result only from years of independence and a deep understanding of the nature of the world. My father never once isolated me from the “real world.” Instead, he found a unique way of protecting that left me both completely aware and largely unscathed. By leaving me free to make mistakes and chase wild dreams, my father was always able to help ground me back in reality. Personal responsibilities, priorities and commitments are all values that are etched into my mind, just as they are within my father's.

In a few short months, I will reach the same benchmark that my father did on his eighteenth birthday. However I will not go forth into a cruel, cold world without a guiding star. I have always known that my path in life will be paradoxically different from, but also much the same as, my father's. Education has always been my focus, but the joy I find in nature and hard work could only be traits taught by the man who now walks beside me. I will, with luck, never buckle under the same burdens he has borne nor will I forget the values he has instilled in me.

On this sunny September afternoon, as I envision my own future, I cannot help but wonder what my father sees as we gaze across campus.

Morgan Elliot '19

Monadnock Waldorf High School, Keene, N.H.

The shop floor is always dirty. A century of grease and grit has been ground into the concrete beneath the shoes of men. Some of the last train tracks in Cheshire County are set in the shop floor from when it was a shoe factory. Years ago, someone poured concrete over the rails to level the floor, but the repairs crumbled away, leaving the tracks exposed in broken channels that quickly gather gunk and grime. The building's ancient, ugly bunker-like walls stand as proudly as ever, but rough, like the face of an old man, and the boarded-up windows give it an air of tomb-like secrecy, mysterious and lonely.

I began working at the shop at age twelve, and I have gone there on my bike almost every day since. It isn't far, but in the standard six-month New England winters, biking can be challenging. Imagine the fading light of a February afternoon: it's snowing, but I'm on my bike charging down unplowed roads as soon as school lets out. I can't wait to get to work. I love to fly along the asphalt with complete abandon; I keep a stopwatch fixed to the handlebars to time my rides, only stopping the clock when I've skidded to a stop at the shop's entrance. I enter through the door marked by the shop's only sign, a tiny peeling thing with the name "Fix" in black on yellowed plastic. I stash my bike behind the rack of windshield wipers, and I take it all in again: the air compressor's racket, the bitter scent of solvents, and the '75 Datsun 280z, its three shades of primer oddly resplendent in the flickering fluorescent light. I survey the work ahead of me while snapping on a pair of Black Lightning powder-free nitrile gloves.

I love working on a car, my arm thrust deep into its convoluted innards. I love a caked greasy Volvo 240 underside suspended above me as I remove a cancerous rusty hole before welding in a new piece of steel. In face shield and earmuffs, I saw out the disintegrated portion. With my real-life light saber, I plasma-cut a piece of new sheet metal the size of the hole and, once it is hammered and trimmed into submission, it becomes one with the car by way of the trusty Lincoln Electric welder. Then I grind the seams until they disappear and the panel becomes whole. Equally, I love to build custom side pipes or re-animate an engine — the roar of a

newly modified Saab 99E 1703cc, that just last week was swaying on a chain like a stripped animal carcass, is sublime. But even the simplest tasks — changing a set of tires or replacing brake pads — delight me.

Outside lie some fifty cars on which I might ply my trade, some just waiting for an oil change, but many others lost in the limbo of passing years. Rot and decay consume them; eager knotweed bursts through their bellies. All around the building grasses and trees grow unhindered, an unsightly jungle, teeming with life. Crickets by the dozens hop aside as I walk through the waist-high grass, stray cats coolly ignore me. It is common to see the cats strutting down the dusty driveway, or to hear them fighting amongst the sea of cars in the untamed thicket.

Being at the shop alone in the evening is magical: looking out across the cars, as the sun silhouettes the dead treetops. At age twelve, I was sure I would be a mechanic but, having fulfilled that wish, I've come to realize that my intellectual and creative aspirations extend far beyond this gloriously dirty old shoe factory that I love so much. Even so, my time at Fix always seems too short, and, as I race home in the dark, I can think only about what I will work on when I return tomorrow.



Justin Winokur '18  
Stowe High School, Stowe, Vermont

*Food for Thought*

The memory of my first McDonald's hamburger is still fresh in my mind. I can easily recall the way that the acidic pickles overpowered my senses, how their pungent fragrance wafted through my car and invaded my clothes. I can feel the soggy buns disintegrating atop my tongue, so unlike any other bread I have ever had, and the meager patty crumbling between my teeth. These flavors and textures are memorable because they were novel, because I was not raised on such hamburgers but tried one for the first time during a recent family car ride home from Canada. My parents were puzzled by my desire to consume a food that they had always regarded as taboo. My rationale was this: I do not eat the hamburger because it might be delicious or good for me. I eat it to learn about the world.

I was an intensely curious child. My parents did their best to fuel the flames of my natural desire to learn because, as a homeschooler, I did not have the strict schedule and resources of my public-school-going peers. In order for homeschooling to work I had to be self-motivated. My school days became about the things I wanted to learn, about the books I wanted to read and the pictures I wanted to draw. With no television, I was forced to use my imagination for entertainment. I wrote stories, visited science museums, had pretend sword fights in the woods with my friends, and learned how to play the cello. My Dad taught me to make music with a guitar and a piano, my mom taught me how to use pencils to turn three dimensions into two, I taught myself how to see meaning in poems and literature, and I learned my math facts by playing games with my family. I joined an alternative education community to study Japanese and writing. At times I took trips to art classes

and yoga studios, or went to my Dad's office and browsed law books while simultaneously growing tomatoes on his windowsills. Not once did I have to sacrifice my natural curiosity to finish my homework or stay up late to write an essay. I had freedom to educate myself and explore my mind.

My time was spent with other homeschoolers and their parents, a band of intellectuals, artists, business people, and activists. Together we took classes and talked politics, organized talent shows and had tremendous potlucks. Our dinners were not host to greasy fast food hamburgers and sugary sodas, but “weird hippy food”: salads from our backyards, vegetarian lasagna, poultry and beef raised by our neighbors, homemade this-and-that, organic everything. It was a delicious, comforting, tremendous part of my life that taught me how to value the Earth and the products of its soil. I was connected to my meals and aware of their journey to my table. To me, that was the way food should be. Yet the curiosity that I had freely nurtured screamed within me, “what else is there?” What, if this is the way food should be, could draw so many people to food so different?

I consumed the hamburger because that question consumed me. My curiosity to understand the other side of the argument and to see life from a different perspective overpowered my boundaries, for some things cannot be judged without first being experienced. The world is a massive place full of diversity and variety, and I did not want to limit myself by knowing just a part of it. I wanted to try that unfamiliar hamburger to perceive the world from a new angle, just as I wanted to attend public school and discover what was beyond my small, earthy, homeschooling community. I was taught to be curious, and that curiosity would not - will not - allow me to see life through a single lens.