

Activity: Brainstorm and Write Your Essay

Using a prompt from the Common App, this activity demonstrates the process for brainstorming your response to your chosen essay prompt.

Prompt

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.

Choose Your Theme

For each topic (background, identity, interest, or talent) listed in the prompt, brainstorm how that theme makes you uniquely you. Then choose the theme that is most important to you.

Background (e.g., I emigrated to the U.S. five years ago):

Identity (e.g., I am deaf):

Interest (e.g., I am passionate about oceanography):

Talent (e.g., I am captain of the basketball team):

Reflect on Your Theme

Connect your theme with the attributes that make you a strong candidate by reflecting on how they shaped you.

1. How does your theme define you?

2. Are there specific ways your theme changed you?

3. How does your theme — and the story you tell about it — reflect the unique contributions you could make to a college or university?

Tell Your Story

Now, on a separate piece of paper or using a computer, compose an essay that gives insight into who you are and how your theme has shaped you — your strengths, abilities, passions, and dreams. Remember, this is a personal statement, not an academic essay.

Find the complete list of Common App essay prompts at www.commonapp.org/apply/essay-prompts.