

# Introduction to the College Application Process

**California Community College System** – 115 colleges. [www.cccco.edu](http://www.cccco.edu) - Application cycle: late winter to spring of senior year.

**California State University** – [www.csumentor.org](http://www.csumentor.org) - Application cycle - Oct. 1 – Nov. 30, 2020. 23 colleges. Admissions are based on the CSU Admissions Index (NOTE: changes due to COVID-19). No essays or letters of recommendation required. (Due to COVID-19, some activities and school involvement may be included.)

**University of California** – [www.universityofcalifornia.edu/apply](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/apply) - Admissions cycle - Nov. 1 – Nov. 30, 2020. Application opens August 1, 2020. 9 colleges. Essays and activities required, no letters of recommendation.

**UC Personal Statement Prompts:** As you respond to the essay prompts, think about the admission and scholarship officers who will read your statement and what you want them to understand about you. The personal statement should be exactly that – personal. This is your opportunity to tell about yourself - your hopes, ambitions, life experience, and inspirations. Take your time on this assignment. Be open. Be reflective. Find your individual voice and express it honestly.

**Directions:** You will have 8 questions to choose from. You must respond to only 4 of the 8 questions. Each response is limited to a maximum of 350 words.

Which questions you choose to answer is entirely up to you: But you should select questions that are most relevant to your experience and that best reflect your individual circumstances.

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.
2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.
3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.
5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?
6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.
7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
8. Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you stand out as a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?

**Common Application** – [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) - Admissions cycle opens – August 1, 2020. Deadlines vary by college. About 900 member institutions. Essays, activities and letters of recommendation required and may also have college specific supplements to the application that include one or more additional essay or short answer prompts.

## 2020-2021 Common Application Essay Prompts:

The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores? Choose the option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. (The application won't accept a response shorter than 250 words.) Choose one that will be sent to all schools selected:

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

**New (Optional) COVID-19 question (Common App):**

1. Community disruptions such as COVID-19 and natural disasters can have deep and long-lasting impacts. If you need it, this space is yours to describe those impacts. Colleges care about the effects on your health and well-being, safety, family circumstances, future plans, and education, including access to reliable technology and quiet study spaces (250 words)
  - Do you wish to share anything on this topic? Y/N
  - Please use this space to describe how these events have impacted you.
  - The question will be optional and will appear in the Additional Information section of the application. The response length will be limited to 250 words.
  - The question will be accompanied by a more detailed FAQ to help students consider the kinds of impacts they may wish to report, including illness and loss, housing and employment disruptions, and shifting family obligations.

**Coalition for College Application** – [www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org) – Can begin application at any time. Submission timelines and application deadlines vary by college. About 150 member institutions. Only **three colleges** are Coalition Application exclusive (University of Washington, University of Florida, University of Maryland, College Park). Many more colleges accept the Common Application or utilize their own applications accessed on the college websites. Essays, activities and letters of recommendation may be required.

**2020-2021 Coalition Application Essay Prompts:**

Many of the colleges and universities that accept the Coalition application requires you to submit at least one essay as part of your application. You can start working on these essays at any time and save drafts in your MyCoalition Locker. While there is no perfect length for an essay, the Coalition Application recommends that you aim for 500 to 550 words. For more information on specific application requirements, please consult the website for each institution to which you are applying as requirements often vary.

1. Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it.
2. Describe a time when you made a meaningful contribution to others in which the greater good was your focus. Discuss the challenges and rewards of making your contribution.
3. Has there been a time when you've had a long cherished or accepted belief challenges? How did you respond? How did the challenge affect your beliefs?
4. What is the hardest part of being a student now? What's the best part? What advice would you give a younger sibling or friend (assuming they would listen to you)?
5. Submit an essay on a topic of your choice.

**Individual college applications** – the application is specific to the individual college and can only be found and submitted from that particular college website or source. The requirements to complete the application vary. There may or may not be required essays and/or letters of recommendation.