

## College Essays (12.2)

### Goal

Students will brainstorm personal characteristics, values, and unique experiences in order to draft a compelling college essay.

### Recommended Preparation for Students

After completion of this lesson the recommendation is for students to complete **Module 1: Complete Prep Work for Your FAFSA or CADAA**. In the module, they will:

- Learn which application is the right one for them.
- Get a customized plan to help with FAFSA or CADAA.
- Get a FAFSA/CADAA checklist so they can be ready to apply as soon as the application opens.

### Lesson Time Options

This lesson requires one 45-60 minute class period. Educators are strongly encouraged to instruct students to save their student worksheet as a Word or Google document so that students can upload their essay draft to **My Documents** on **CaliforniaColleges.edu**.

### Student Materials

- Chromebook/Laptop
- Internet Access
- Worksheet

### In This Packet

This packet includes everything you need to complete the lesson.

- Educator Guide
- Student Worksheet

### Standards

The literacy skills of Common Core can be broken down into sections – reading, writing, and speaking and listening (language skills are outside of the focus of CaliforniaColleges.edu). In the lesson, students will practice the following skills:

Common Core Skill	Practiced in this Lesson
Reading for Information	CCR Reading 1, 4, 5; Reading Information- 1, 2, 4
Narrative Writing	CCR Writing – 3, 5; Writing – 3, 5

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

Students in today's classrooms are learning not only academic skills and content, but how to be productive members of global communities. There are work habits, experiences, and skills that students need to develop to be ready for higher education and careers.

21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skill	Practiced in this Lesson
Critical Thinking	X
Digital Skills	X
Comparing Approaches	X

## College Essays: Educator Guide

### Goal

Students will brainstorm personal characteristics, values, and unique experiences in order to draft a compelling college essay.

### Recommended Preparation

- Remind students to complete **Module 1: Complete Prep Work for Your FAFSA or CADAA** after this lesson. Students will find this module by signing into **CaliforniaColleges.edu**, hovering over **My Plan**, clicking on **Lessons**, and selecting the **Financial Aid** tab.
- Review the **Student Worksheet**. The worksheet provides clear instructions for students to complete the lesson. Determine how you will use the worksheet.
- **Review UC Personal Insight Questions and Common App Personal Statement Prompts**. You may choose to ask students to respond to some or all of these prompts as part of or after this lesson.
- [UC Personal Insight Questions](#)
  - Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.
  - 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.
  - What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
  - Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.
  - 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?
  - Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.
  - What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
  - Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you stand out as a strong candidate for admission to the University of California?
- [Common Application Personal Statement Prompts](#)
  - 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.
  - 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?
  - Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
  - 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?
  - Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

- 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?
- 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.

### Getting Started

- You may print the **Student Worksheet** for students or embed the link in the materials you share with students.

### Guiding Question

How can your essay help you present your authentic self to colleges?

### Bell Work (5 minutes)

- Students will answer the bell work question: What do you think makes you a good candidate for college? List 3-6 characteristics that make you a strong applicant. Be sure to consider what colleges are looking for in a student.
- Allow 2-3 timed minutes past the bell.
- Students will match their winning qualities to the activities they have participated in.

### Introduction (10-15 minutes)

- Students will read an article on **CaliforniaColleges.edu** titled **California Colleges College Admissions Essays**. Students will then discuss their thoughts with an elbow partner.

### Activity (35 minutes)

1. Students will identify potential essay topics and then narrow down their list by answering specific questions. Encourage students to list as many topics as possible in their initial brainstorm. At your discretion, ask students to share some of their topic ideas with the class.
2. Students will select one topic and draft responses to specific questions. Allocate as much time as possible to drafting these responses.

### Upload Student Worksheet

- Consider asking students to upload their student worksheet with their essay draft to **My Documents**, found under **My Plan**.

# College Essays: Student Worksheet

## Goal

You will brainstorm personal characteristics, values, and unique experiences in order to draft a compelling college essay.

## Part I: Bell Work

What do you think makes you a good candidate for college? List 3-6 characteristics that make you a strong applicant. Be sure to consider what colleges are looking for in a student. Under each characteristic, list an activity, accomplishment, or experience that proves you have that quality.

## Part II: Introduction

- Go to **CaliforniaColleges.edu** and sign in. Consider saving this worksheet as a Word or Google document so you can save your work.
- Type “college essay” in the search box on the top right side of the page and find the article titled **California Colleges College Admissions Essays**. Take several minutes to review the content of the page then discuss your thoughts with an elbow partner.

## Part III: Activity

1. With an elbow partner, answer the following questions:
  - What are the UC essays called? How many must you complete?
  - How many Common App essay prompts can you choose from?
  - If you apply to a CSU, in what cases might you have to answer special questions?
2. List college essay topics about which you have already considered writing. If you are not sure what to write about, list and/or describe things that really matter to you. List at least 7 potential topics.
3. Why do these topics matter to you?

4. How do these topics demonstrate something about you that grades, test scores, and teacher recommendations cannot?
  
5. Which topic(s) will give you the opportunity to reflect on and write about how you see the world? Select up to 5 topics from your list in #2.
  
6. Which topic(s) listed in #5 will give you the opportunity to reflect on and write about how you deal with tough situations?
  
7. Which topic(s) listed in #6 will give you the opportunity to present your authentic self to colleges?
  
8. Select one topic you listed in #7. Without worrying about writing a perfect essay, take some time to draft a few paragraphs that address the following questions. Instead of focusing on what you think colleges want to read, what your family might want you to write about or not write about, or what you have heard from others, focus on what you want to say.
  - How does this topic highlight your worldview? What is your worldview?
  - How does this topic demonstrate the ways you deal with tough situations? Be specific, honest, and creative in your reflection.
  - What does this topic tell colleges about you?

#### **Part IV: Upload**

Follow your teacher's instructions to save your essay draft (your essay draft may be this document or a separate document).