

"Insider's Quick Guide: Selecting College Essay Topics"

For more information or to receive other handouts from prior workshops, contact:
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I. Coming from an application essay evaluator, the single best thing you can do is...

Ponder!. That means think deeply, analytically, introspectively. Be original. Create, don't innovative. Research other topics and see how yours compares. Think on multiple levels when applying your answer. Think how the treatment of your topic can be uniquely interpreted. The more you ponder your topic, the more you'll discover unique ways to engage the reader and have them see what kind of person you are.

II. Behind closed doors in evaluation committee, it'll never officially be said ...

1. This kid is trying too hard to be creative; he's talking in circles and making no sense.
2. Another "Harry Potter" essay? We're a college not a middle school camp!
3. (Palm to forehead) "Proud to be an Amer-I-can."
4. Not another ^%\$*& rap quote!
5. Not another essay on [] ...

III. Topics that can be difficult ...

1. **The spoiled brat:** How I discovered myself traveling abroad. Growing up as a 1%-er.
2. **The poverty tourist:** My mission in Kenya.
3. **Self-identity:** LGBT/sexual identity; My name is Albino; "Fat acceptance"
4. **Ethnicity:** I was the only [] in the school; Born of bi-racial parents, how I discovered who I am.
5. **VIP:** My internship in the White House; When I Met the Pope.
6. **Extremes:** "Someone who illustrates some ideal traits in a leader is Hitler."
7. **Victimization:** I think I was date-raped; My alcoholic dad.
8. **Personal behavior:** "Truthfully, I Did Inhale", "Losing My Virginity", "I Don't Drink Anymore", "Four Hours in Jail".
9. **The non-struggle struggle:** I lost 40 pounds; My marathon; My first bungee jump.
10. **The non-failure failure:** We didn't place at World's; I didn't make the Olympic team; The shot the goalie didn't save

Borderline:

11. **Death:** The death of my []. My near-death experience.
12. **Sadness:** bullying, getting cut from the team, no date for the prom, my parents' divorce
13. **Social issues:** feminism, environmentalism
14. **Admired Figures:** Alexander the Great, Da Vinci, Edison, Lady Gaga, others
15. **Relationship difficulties:** My love/hate relationship with my [family member, teacher, coach, activity instructor, neighbor, classmate, teammate, camp roommate, etc.]

IV. The quote that will make you realize that you can't game the system so you should just be yourself: "Yeah, those essays were bad but not bad enough to change it from 'Accept'".