

COMMON APP ESSAY TIPS: PROMPT 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 that is 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."

*No 2017-2018 changes to prompt.

1. WHAT PUZZLES IGNITE A FIRE WITHIN YOU?



This question is about problems, but it's quite different from prompts 2 (dealing with setbacks and failure) and 3 (handling core beliefs and ethical dilemmas). Here, explain your approach to problem-solving. That is, what motivates you to care so much about an issue and how critically have you thought about developing an action plan to resolve the problem?

A common mistake is to discuss the problem in the abstract. Admissions officers don't actually want to know how global warming can be solved. Instead, they want to know why you care so deeply about it, based on your personal experiences and knowledge, and what your thinking process is for developing a solution. You could be motivated by family reasons, nostalgia, a desire to face your fears, etc.

2. HOW DO YOU APPROACH PROBLEM- SOLVING?



In your opening paragraph, you should introduce (1) the issue you want to explore and (2) why you care deeply about solving the problem. Rather than concentrate on the issue, make sure to focus on the personal impact this issue has. Why would solving this problem be meaningful to you as an individual? What personal goal do you hope to accomplish by addressing the matter?

You don't need to have solved the problem. Rather, emphasize the personal journey you underwent during the problem-solving exercise. Show your concerns, your fears, and aspirations. What is it that you wanted to prove to yourself in this quest? You can talk about global issues or something emotional as overcoming the fear of taking a shower after a near-drowning incident.

3. IS YOUR UNIQUENESS AN ASSET?



Based on your experience(s), are you the curious type that seeks out meaningful challenges in life to grow intellectually and emotionally? Are you committed enough to persevere, no matter the outcome? How does the way you think about important questions demonstrate your uniqueness?

Show the type of person you aspire to be and how you plan to cultivate a well-rounded personality. Identify the college experience you hope will help you in this endeavor and how you desire to contribute to your future community.

Remember that this is YOUR story. Each word should focus on your critical thinking skills and motivations. Show commitment, ingenuity, and optimism. Will you be an asset to your new environment? If so, prove it!



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