

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC MESSAGES

What should admissions officers definitely know about you? Consider the questions below and provide bullet point explanations. Once you have developed your personal statement outline, make sure that the essay will communicate these strategic messages.

Academic performance: Do you need to explain any specific grade drops?

Academic performance: Do you need to explain any downward or up and down trends?

Family circumstances: Are there any family circumstances that caused you to struggle academically or required you to reduce your afterschool engagement?

Socioeconomic context: Is it important for the admissions officer to know about the financial limitations that you and your family experienced that make your performance at school particularly impressive.

Achievements: Have you accomplished something extraordinary that needs to be explained in detail in order for the admissions officer to fully appreciate the impact?



PERSONAL STATEMENT BARE BONES OUTLINE

Introduction

Your thesis

Body #1 Main idea or topic sentence

Body #2 Main idea or topic sentence

Body #3 Main idea or topic sentence

Conclusion



BACKWARDS OUTLINE TASK

Introduction What is the thesis statement? Does the essay topic sound interesting?

Body #1 What are the main points? Does the paragraph have a smooth transition?
How does this support the thesis?

Body #2 What are the main points? Does the paragraph have a smooth transition?
How does this support the thesis?

Body #3 What are the main points? Does the paragraph have a smooth transition?
How does this support the thesis?

Conclusion Does the conclusion pull things together?
What was this person's standout factor?



COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY PROMPTS

Choose the essay prompt that best fits the personal statement outline you have developed:

- ☐ 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?
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ 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 about, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

