COMMON APP ESSAY TIPS: PROMPT 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?"

* Blue text above reflects 2017-2018 changes to prompt.

1. IDENTIFY A CONFLICT THAT JEOPARDIZES YOUR PASSIONS

Describe something you enjoy or care about immensely. The activity doesn't need to be extraordinary. Rather, be genuine. Also, make sure to identify an issue that threatened your ability to continue pursuing the passion you identified. Show the stakes you thought you could have lost if you couldn't resolve the problem.

Topics can cover any aspect of your life, but be careful when addressing potentially offensive or emotionally charged content. Also, remember that you don't have to have successfully solved the problem. Admissions officers want to learn more about your thinking process and personality and how you cope with difficult situations like failure.

2. SHOW GROWTH IN HANDLING THE ISSUE

Now that you've introduced the dilemma and why it was significant to you, explain how you reacted to the matter, what steps you took to address the issue, and, most importantly, how did the experience alter your perspectives on the issue and expand your viewpoints of the world? How did this "setback" help you become a more well-rounded person?

Think of personal development issues like learning to change your perspective, build perseverance, or become aware of your own prejudices or shortcomings. Show you are mature enough to accept difficult situations such as failure.

3. PROVE YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO SUCCEED

How did encountering the dilemma or reaching that epiphany change or reinforce your values? Would what you have learned help you thrive in a college environment where you'd assuredly meet people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives? How do you intend to apply what you have learned to life in college and beyond?

Show how your experience helped shape who you are when it comes to facing adversity and the personal goals you have set for yourself as a result. Identify a couple of courses and extracurricular activities you'd tackle with your new outlook on life. Stylistically, end your essay by coming full circle. Combine elements in your opening paragraph with an optimistic future outlook.

Remember you're telling YOUR story. Each word should focus on personal growth. Resilience and perseverance are the hallmarks of success. Do you have what it takes to succeed? If so, prove it!

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