

# Essays with Purpose



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## 25 Essay Topics that Worked

These are essay topics that worked for some of my former students. The purpose of this list is to give you ideas, not to limit you or suggest you should write an essay that has already been written.

Tell your own story. It's inside of you already!

This is just a partial list. I have worked on many, many more wonderful essays on every topic under the sun. In my experience, just about anything can be turned into a college essay as long as you care about it.

**Sports:** I confess I am not a fan of sports, but, wow, I have had the pleasure of reading some good ones! The key to a sports essay is avoid the how-we-won-the-big-game or how-we-lost-the-big-game stereotype. Look for observations about yourself within your experience of playing a sport.

1. When I joined the girls' wrestling team at my school, I found out I am stronger than I knew.
2. I was the slowest runner on my school's track team, and it meant the world to me when my teammates cheered for me anyway and encouraged me to stay on the team.
3. My school's football team suffered from coaching turnover and low participation, but I loved the experience and would do anything just to play the game.

4. I was a golf prodigy expected to turn pro as a young adult, but I got a condition called the yips, and now my goal is to finish in the top half.
5. My teammates on the swim team don't understand why I love backstroke, but to me it's the only stroke there is and if it weren't for backstroke, I wouldn't bother swimming.
6. I was tired of being the girl who got bullied and was always afraid, so I joined a roller derby team, where I learned to be tough and fearless.

**Passion essays:** These are my favorite! Don't write about something you love to do. Get to the truth of why you love this particular thing. What is it about XYZ that lights you up?

7. Baking Christmas cookies is a competitive sport in my competitive family, and I am proud to say I have won more than I have lost over the years.
8. My mother joked that I should take up crocheting granny squares after we saw a chic crocheted purse in a shop window. I took that challenge, and I have not stopped crocheting since and never will.
9. My favorite holiday is Halloween, and every year I come up with ways to ramp up the trick-or-treating experience at my house for the kids in my neighborhood.
10. I dream of a life when I get to ride horses every day. I am not exactly sure how to get there, but I know the destination will be a barn.
11. I planted a small garden during Covid, and that garden plot became everything to me, the holder of all my hopes, dreams, and sorrows.

**Unique experience:** I love these memorable essays about a unique and sometimes wild experience. The secret to this essay's success is to focus on your reaction to the unfamiliar circumstances.

12. My family went on a road trip to Yellowstone, and every single thing went wrong.
13. I was conceived with donor sperm and have 21 donor siblings I know. And every one of them is smarter than I am!
14. I made a best friend on a cruise when I was six, even though I am a girl and he is a boy and we had nothing in common and still don't. We have met up five times since and always have the best time.
15. My family travels all summer in an RV, and the time I found myself in a boat at the basin of Niagra Falls, I thought, I cannot believe this is my life.
16. My family adopted a stray dog, but he ran away after a few months with us. Two years later he turned back up on our doorstep!

**Sensitive topics:** Essays about sensitive topics, such as religion, politics, and mental health: When you choose to write about one of these topics, you are choosing a difficult path. These

essays are hard to pull off. Be careful not to lose yourself when writing about one of these super personal topics.

17. My trip to Israel was an amazing experience, until I was denied entry to a temple because my father, not my mother, is Jewish.

18. I knew I wanted to be a nurse when I carried a sign in my first pro-choice march.

19. Undergoing treatment for cancer was way easier than learning to manage anxiety.

**Essays that defy categorization:** These essays offer a bit of intrigue, an unusual perspective, an astute observation, or just a funny take on the ordinary.

20. I was so afraid of driving that I planned to be that kid who just rode his bike everywhere. But I overcame my fear and now I love driving, even on 285.

21. I love the Godfather trilogy so much, I will even defend the third film.

22. My life as a waitress at a restaurant called The Tilted Kilt.

23. Some reflections on working at a restaurant called Skips.

24. This essay is about my relationship with my twin, and I am super offended that my twin isn't writing her essay about me!

25. People at school say they know me by my distinct laugh. But here is what they don't know. A lot of times when I am laughing, I don't actually think the joke is funny.