



1 Research your options

2 Finance your studies

3 Complete your application

4 Apply for your Student Visa

5 Prepare for your departure

**Your 5 Steps
to U.S. Study**



Essay writing preparation

Research

Know your audience—address what they want to know:

- Think of the reader as an insightful potential friend
- Read the university’s website, Facebook and Twitter feeds
- Identify specific details that attracted you to the university (e.g. programs, people, courses, etc.)

Brainstorm your own history

- Write free association notes
- Think about your activities outside school
- Track how your experiences, even ‘minor’ ones, led to who you are now
- Identify continuous themes/threads in your passions and activities
- Describe the development of your interests or activities (e.g. “This experience led to...”)
- Interview family and friends about yourself

Develop an idea

- What is unique about you? How does that fit with what the university is looking for?
- How did you take full advantage of the resources available to you?
- How have your academic and extra-curricular activities influenced one another?
- What insights have you gained from your life experiences? Try to demonstrate self-reflection.
- How have you responded to challenges?

Style and proofreading:

1. Six basic elements of a good essay

- A “hook” to grab attention
- Simplicity – develop just a few main ideas
- Realism
- Sincerity
- Clarity – read your essay out aloud to someone who hasn’t read it
- Surprise

2. Be yourself

Use your natural language and no slang unless it is necessary to the content.

3. Spelling and grammar

Use spell check and set preferences to “U.S. English”

4. Paragraph structure

Lead (Topic) sentence, support sentences and summarizing sentence

5. Check that the name of the university is correct on each essay



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Ideas for developing your essay/personal statement

- Who are the five people who have most influenced you?
- List three virtues you admire and respect.
- Discuss three significant lessons you have learned.
- Discuss a failure that taught you something.
- Respond to three quotes that mean something to you.
- Remember your greatest success.
- What is an education supposed to provide?
- Describe five special things about you?
- What is your 'one-sentence life philosophy'?
- Describe the five places you have been that impressed you the most.
- What is your favorite social activity?
- Tell the story of a fear you conquered.
- Discuss three goals that you have in life.

Knowing what the expectations are from U.S. college admission staff can be very helpful. [Review the video from Yale's Admission Officer Marcia Landesmann](#) that will provide you that insight.

As you research you will find many resources available to you on-line. Be comfortable with relying on a couple that you like.

This will also help you in feeling in control of the U.S. college application process instead of being overwhelmed with the task at hand. The process is simple when you create your plans and timeline of your tasks.



Vanderbilt admission website

Until you feel more comfortable with the process and accessing information - perhaps you can start by referring to this [website with blog](#) that shares tips and information of all things related to undergraduate admissions.

Helpful links

[Johns Hopkins University - Essays that Worked](#)
[Other Essay Examples](#)

From *The Truth About Getting In* by Katherine Cohen, PhD and *How to Write a Winning College Application Essay Revised 4th Edition* by Michael James Mason.