

ESSAY #1

BRAINSTORMING GUIDE

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What makes you feel alive when you are doing it, and why? (300 words maximum)

The word “alive” was intentionally chosen for this essay prompt because it can have many different interpretations. For some, “alive” may invoke memories of thrill-seeking adventures like white water rafting in the Grand Canyon or sky-diving above Victoria Falls. For others, it may be something closer to home that makes you feel alive – meditating, running, yoga, cycling – or another daily routine or hobby that keeps you grounded or brings you joy. It may not be an activity at all. It could be quiet moments of reflection or spending quality time with a person, place, or cause that is important to you.

THOUGHT STARTERS

If you're still struggling to find your essay response, consider the following prompts to help you narrow down your possible responses:

1. If you only had 2 free hours a week to spend doing something for you, how would you spend it?
2. Reflect on times when your schedule has been – so busy that you felt you didn't have time for anything else. What activities or pastimes were you not willing to compromise?
3. If you could only pursue one of your hobbies or passions going forward, which would you choose and why?
4. What if the word “alive” was replaced by:

• fulfilled	• connected	• challenged
• inspired	• at peace	• balanced
• invigorated	• safe	• happy
5. Consider how your response would differ if you tried to respond from a professional lens vs. a personal lens. You may interpret “alive” to mean any one (or more) of these words, so attempt different prompts to see what resonates with you.

STEPS TO CRAFTING YOUR STORY

1. **Reflect.** Be intentional about creating space for yourself to focus and be creative as you develop your essay response. Remember, there is no right answer. The right answer is your answer!
2. **Put pen to paper.** Sometimes getting started is the hardest part. Make a list of potential ideas and write a few versions if need be. It may take some time to determine which words to choose and how to present them. Be open to drafting and re-drafting.
3. **Step back.** Consider which option best tells your unique story. What is it about the story that can't be replicated?
4. **Think about the big picture.** How does your essay response complement what you are sharing in Essay #2? Do you want to share something new with the admissions committee or reinforce something that has already been shared elsewhere? Be strategic.