

COLLEGE ESSAY: BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET

One of the best methods of brainstorming is to begin with a grand list of potential topics and slowly let the best rise to the top. In order to generate a laundry list of important people, events, accomplishments and activities in your life, fill in the worksheet below. As you go through this lesson, you will begin to separate the good ideas from the bad.

1. If you were writing your **autobiography** right now, what would be five to ten events or things that would have to be included? It will be easiest to think over your life chronologically. *As you identify these moments, contemplate **why** are these so critical to include in the story of your life, **how** they influence you becoming the person you are today, and **how** they influence today who you want to become/be tomorrow.*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

2. List five accomplishments you have made over the last ~ 6 years. *(Do not limit yourself to accomplishments for which you have been formally recognized since the most interesting essays are often based on accomplishments that may have seemed insignificant at the time, but become crucial when placed in the context of your life.*

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |

3. List three to 5 to 6 things on which you consider yourself very knowledgeable.
*(As you do, contemplate **why** you listed what you listed. What do your choices highlight about **you!**)*

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |

4. What are your most important extracurricular or community activities?

*(As you do, contemplate **why** you listed what you listed. What do your choices highlight about **you!**)*

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |

5. List 6 people whom you respect and admire. They can be real or fictional, dead or alive.

*(As you do, contemplate **why** you listed what you listed. What do your choices highlight about **you!**)*

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |

6. What are your 3 to 4 favorite movies and books/written or illustrated work?

*(As you do, contemplate **why** you listed what you listed. What do your choices highlight about **you!**)*

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |

7. Who are your favorite 3 to 4 musicians, fine artists, actors, athletes, authors, activists?

*(As you do, contemplate **why** you listed what you listed. What do your choices highlight about **you!**)*

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |

8. List two times in life when you failed miserably and two times when you were a fantastic success.

Miserable failures

- | |
|----------|
| 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ |

Fantastic successes

- | |
|----------|
| 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ |

9. Ask your parents/guardians/older family members, who know you best for 5 or 6 events in your life that they will always remember (*serious, impressive, amusing, different, quirky, intriguing, or other*)

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |

10. List 6 of your favorite things and 4 of your least favorite. *These can include activities, places, objects, states of being, moments etc.*

*(As you do, contemplate **why** you listed what you listed. What do your choices highlight about **you!**)*

Favorites

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Least Favorites

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____