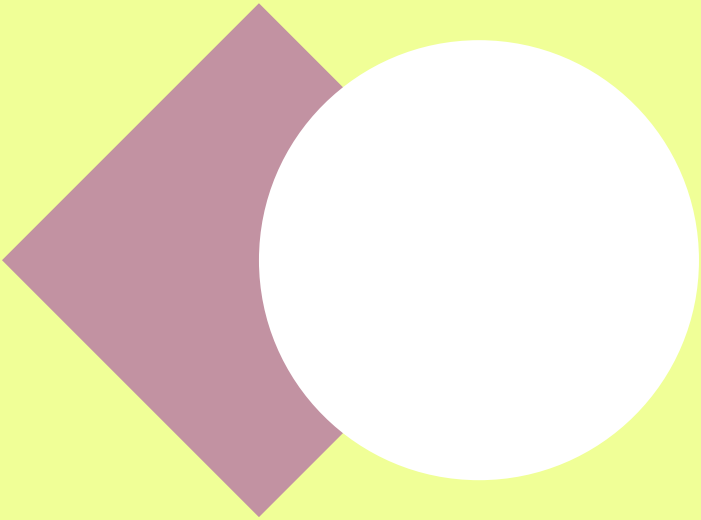
The art of ***topic*** in application essays.



3 ways to find a college essay topic that feels **SO YOU**

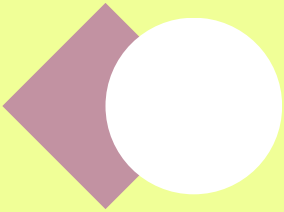
01. Ask what makes people say, “That's SO you.”

Ask your family or friends what you're known for. Instead of asking for your best qualities (kind, smart, hardworking, etc.), ask about your habits, obsessions, strong opinions, recurring complaints, or things you do without even realizing it.

Sometimes the people around us recognize parts of us that we haven't quite noticed ourselves.

Or turn inward. What's something you think about or do all the time but rarely share?

We’re going for the ways your personality and values show up in real life, not just words that describe you.

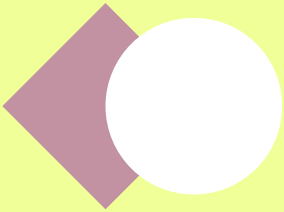


02. Notice what brings out more of you.

What topics get you telling stories, sharing opinions, making observations, or expressing feelings without much prompting?

It's not entirely about which topics make you sound the most excited or enthusiastic. It's about how much of yourself comes through when you talk, write, or think about something.

Does exploring this topic bring out parts of you that feel super you?



03. Explore what connects to other parts of your life.

Could this topic lead to more stories, memories, experiences, feelings, questions, or unexpected connections to other parts of your life?

Sometimes a seemingly small topic opens up a whole world of who you are. You don't need to include every connection in your essay, but exploring them can help you discover just how much this topic actually reveals about your essence.

The takeaway

I've read plenty of strong essays that leave me thinking, "Okay, this kid is smart, thoughtful, capable, accomplished. They're a strong applicant."

But the essays that really stay with me—and that I challenge all my students to write—are the ones that make me feel like I've encountered someone's distinct heart, mind, and energy. Like I've spent time in a room with them and gotten to see how they really are, outside of masks and polish. Laughed with them, or felt frustrated alongside them.

I don't feel like the students are trying to prove anything or show me how impressive they are. I just feel like I've met someone's particular humanity. And then I'm able to feel what's special about them through that interaction.

That's what the art of choosing a topic is all about, I think.



Hi! I'm Sana.

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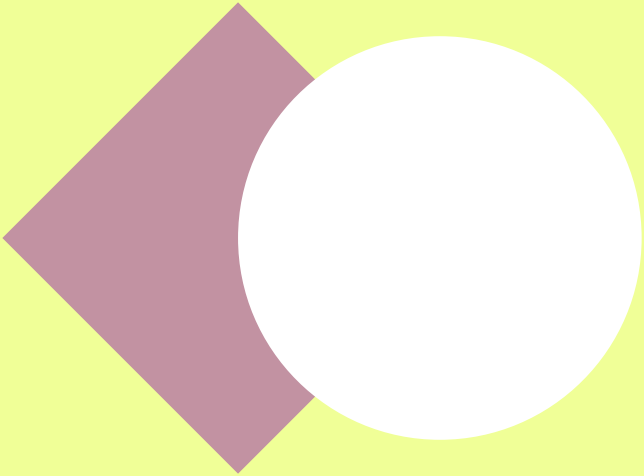
Thanks for being here :)



Have a lovely day.

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