

UC Personal Insight Essays Additional Information and Preparation Exercises

Tips for Writing the Personal Insight Essays

- You are the main topic of the Personal Statements, not the universities, not another person, not the political or economic situation the country is in. The information that you write about always needs to be related back to you and help the reader gain a fuller picture of who you are in the context of pursuing your educational goals.
- Avoid writing from the perspective of “What do they want to hear? What will impress them?” You will never have the answers to those questions and it will weaken your responses.
- Decide what you believe is the most important information the university needs to know and understand about you in order to make the admission decision. Decide what you need to tell the university not what you think they want to hear.
- You are creating the image of the person you are by the information you choose to include in your essays. Be authentic and chose experiences, skills, and/or accomplishments that provide the reader with the most accurate picture of yourself as a student and as a person.
- Avoid using generalizations like, “My summer trip to Italy was significant” or “After my degree, I want to make a difference in the world.” It’s OK to use those statements but you need to include the hows and whys, the details that are specific and important to you. Generalizations make you the same as everyone else. They do not help the reader get to know you better.
- Think about how you got to where you are today and what experiences, individuals, etc. had the most impact on the development of your educational and career goals. What are the significant experiences that brought you here? How are they related? How did one experience lead to the next stage of your journey? By writing from this perspective, you demonstrate self-awareness. Self-awareness is a key indicator of intelligence.
- The strongest essays are those that clearly demonstrate who you are as an individual. They are written from both the mind and the heart. Write from the authenticity of who you are and the truth of your life experiences.

Before you Start Writing

Time spent in prep work will make the process go more smoothly. There are 2 key areas of preparation.

1. Investigate and explore your audience.

- Find out as much as you can about the universities and the major you are applying to.
- Are you competitive for admissions process?
- How do the admissions officers use the essays in the admission process.

2. Explore Yourself

The more you know about yourself the easier it will be to write your essay.

Role and Use of the UC Personal Insight Essays

- The Personal Insight Essays are a required component of your application for the University of California.
- The Personal Insight Essays provide you the opportunity to be more than just a name — it’s where you become an individual, and where you can share your personality, your goals, your experiences, and where you can explain any opportunities or obstacles that have affected your academic record.
- They allow you to add information that you couldn’t work into the other parts of the application and to add clarity, depth, and meaning to information collected in other parts of your UC application.
- The Personal Insight Essays are a critical element in the admission review process for UC Berkeley, and UCLA.. The other UC campuses typically do not use the Personal Insight Essays in the admission process. They are not read in isolation but *with* all the information you provide in your application.
- All UC campuses use the Personal Insight Essays responses for scholarship consideration.
- The Personal Insight Essays will never be the sole criteria for determining the admission decision.

Turn me over for Personal Exploration Exercises



Know Yourself - Exercise 1 - Identify Your Key Personality Traits

Step 1

Under each column, list all the words that best describe. **Me** = How you describe yourself. **Best Friend** = How your best friend would describe you.

Favorite Teacher/Professor = How your Favorite Teacher/Professor would describe you. **Family** = How your Family would describe you.

Me	Best Friend	Favorite Teacher/Professor	Family

Circle the words that came up most often.

Step 2

Pick the 3 words that came up most often and write each word in the boxes below. For each word, list the different situations where you have exhibited this trait/quality.

Key Word	Specific Example (situation) When I have Demonstrated/Exhibited This Quality

Know Yourself – Exercise 2—Significant Life Events

It's important that you understand what significant life events have helped shape you and your unique educational journey. Use the exercise below to help develop this understanding.

Age	Significant Life Event	How does this event relate to your educational journey? Was it an obstacle or a benefit? How did your response to this event inform, inhibit, or enhance your education and subsequent educational goals and accomplishments?

Know Yourself - Exercise 3 – Your Accomplishments

On the chart below, write down everything that makes you proud or feel good about yourself. Don't limit your accomplishments to your academics only. If you have overcome a difficult obstacle/s, make sure to include that on the list. Don't worry how big or small the accomplishment is. If it pops into your head, write it down.

Age	Accomplishment	How this accomplishment is important to me

Know Yourself - Exercise 4 – List Your Skills

List your accomplishments from the chart in Exercise 3. Using only 1 or 2 words, list the skills that it took for you to be able to achieve this accomplishment. Next, write down any additional situations, circumstances, or examples from your life when you have also used these skills.

Accomplishment	Skills That This Accomplishment Demonstrates	Examples of When I have Used These Skills

Need More Help?

UC Personal Insight Questions : <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-questions/transfer/index.html>

SBCC Writing Center: http://www.sbcc.edu/clrc/writing_center/

Applying to UCLA and/or Berkeley? Submit final drafts of your essays for review by Nov. 21st. Email essays to kadams@pipeline.sbcc.edu