

Essay Brainstorming: Describing Yourself

Listed below is a series of adjectives. Quickly circle those words you feel are true about you most of the time.

Self Management Skills			
Dignified	Relaxed	Sensitive	Tactful
Inventive	Unaffected	Serious	Dominant
Prudent	Patient	Original	Practical
Tenacious	Spontaneous	Conservative	Strong-minded
Progressive	Fair-minded	Sincere	Wholesome
Teachable	Methodical	Calm	Active
Discreet	Reliable	Capable	Affectionate
Kind	Unassuming	Careful	Easygoing
Purposeful	Unaffected	Conscientious	Realistic
Thorough	Far-sighted	Cautions	Trusting
Intellectual	Meticulous	Charming	Independent
Precise	Reserved	Confident	Pleasant
Wise	Understanding	Open	Mild
Academic	Firm	Successful	Resourceful
Adventurous	Cooperative	Competitive	Unexcitable
Adaptable	Broad-minded	Competent	Attractive
Determined	Cool	Clever	Modest
Eager	Considerate	Introspective	Intuitive
Light-hearted	Flexible	Analytical	Helpful
Quiet	Charitable	Forgiving	Outgoing
Tolerant	Positive	Loving	Gentle
Industrious	Enjoyable	Supportive	Good-natured
Polite	Moderate	Consistent	Optimistic
Hopeful	Responsible	Reflective	Organized
Likable	Honest	Assertive	Caring
Rational	Painstaking	Motivated	Curious
Tough	Sociable	Extroverted	Courageous
Individualistic	Forceful	Organized	Energetic
Poised	Sincere	Mature	Trusting
Strong	Formal	Empathetic	Independent
Warm	Natural	Creator	Pleasant
Accurate	Healthy	Theoretical	Steady
Aggressive	Original	Serene	Versatile
Deliberate	Frank	Joiner	Alert
Efficient	Obliging	Enthusiastic	Daring
Logical	Self-confident	Secure	Loyal
Opportunistic	Friendly	Fulfilled	Reflective
Sensible	Open-minded	Cheerful	Trustworthy
Goal-oriented	Self-controlled	Clear-thinking	Imaginative
Ambitious	Generous	Challenger	Persevering
		Genuine	Stable

Which four circled words describe you the best? List them here

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Next, think about experiences, activities, achievements, and/or failures that might best illustrate these adjectives. For instance, if you believe that *creative* describes you well, think of a time when that quality was particularly evident. You might describe how you designed a new logo or slogan for your class prom. Perhaps you could illustrate this quality by describing a situation which shows how you used creativity to solve a problem.

Now, pick two of the qualities you listed above and write down two or more experiences that illustrate that you possess that particular quality.

1. Quality: _____

2. Quality: _____

If you have a difficult time thinking of examples for some of the qualities you circled, you may want to concentrate on other adjectives. Thinking about your personal qualities and listing experiences that illustrate them will help you to discover ways to present your ideas in your essay!

Next, Complete the following brainstorming tasks.

1. What are my talents, strengths...
 - Writing, mathematics, science, foreign language, science, volunteering, leadership, extracurricular activities, athletics, art, music?

2. During my high school days, I have succeeded at...

3. During my high school days, I have been challenged by...

4. The thing most often misunderstood about me...

5. An important decision I made in high school was to...

6. List your in-school and out-of-school activities in order of importance to you (This could include school clubs, sports, volunteer experiences, part-time jobs, etc.)

**Sometime writing about your out-of-classroom interests could help bring out a part of you that is not covered-or not covered completely and to your fullest advantage-elsewhere in your application.*

7. Is there an academic subject that really sparks your interest? Why?

8. Think about how you cope with conflicting demands- juggling school work, family responsibilities, part-time jobs, sports, activities, and volunteering. (College requires a lot of this!) How have you learned to:
 - a. Budget your time?
 - b. Set priorities?
 - c. Make sacrifices?

**Give examples of how you thrive under pressure, or how you take steps to reduce pressure.*

9. There are many reasons to go to college. What are the different things that YOU hope to gain by going to college?

OFFBEAT QUESTIONS TO JOG YOUR MEMORY AND IMAGINATION...

1. Recall a snatch of conversation you overheard while standing in line, waiting for a movie to start, or riding a bus. Why did it catch your interest?
2. Did you ever get something odd in the mail?
3. Which bones have you broken? How?
4. Which childhood possession do you still own?
5. What do you remember about the first person who ever gave you a valentine?
6. Have you ever told a lie you wish you could untell?
7. Have you ever received praise from an unexpected source?
8. Have you ever been someone's hero?
9. If you had to start collecting something, what would you collect?
10. Do you have a hiding place?
11. Have you ever had an idea for an invention?
12. Which section of the newspaper do you always read first?
13. When you and your classmates are reminiscing at your ten-year reunion, which one of your escapades or accomplishments do you think you will be remembered for?
14. Name one thing you were taught in high school that you do not believe?
15. Is your best friend in ninth grade still your best friend?
16. Have you ever traveled to a place you want never to visit again?
17. Have you ever played it safe and regretted it?
18. Have you ever taken a chance and regretted it?
19. Have you done something recently that you laugh about every time you think of it?
20. Has someone ever turned to you for help because you have a particular talent, skill, or kind of knowledge?
21. Have you ever pulled a practical joke? A successful scam?
22. What unusual feature would you include in the design of your ideal house?
23. What is the worst time you ever had at an event where a good time was the point?
24. What is the most embarrassing thing you have ever done?
25. What is the dullest thing you have ever done?
26. What is the best advice you have ever received? The worst?
27. How did you learn to ride a bike, or ice skate, or drive a car?
28. After your last argument, what did you wish you had said?
29. Do you consider yourself an optimist? How does your optimism reveal itself? How would another person recognize it?
30. Have you ever experienced an irrepressible urge to laugh in a formal circumstance or during a solemn event?
31. Have you ever taught someone how to do something?
32. What three words would a friend use to describe you? Would your parents or teachers use the same words? Would you?
33. How do you respond when you stake yourself on something—for instance, an athletic contest or a school election—and lose?
34. Which photograph in your family's album means the most to you?
35. If you could arrange to be reincarnated, what would you be?

*From Peterson's Practically Painless Guide: Writing a Winning College Application Essay
By Wilma Davidson, ED.D & Susan McCloskey, PH.D, published by Thompson Peterson's, 1996.*