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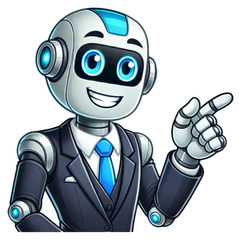

Purdue supplemental essays

Do you have your heart set on becoming a Boilermaker? If Purdue University is on your college list, you'll need to tackle a few supplemental essays as part of your application. These short prompts are your opportunity to showcase what makes you a strong fit for Purdue—beyond your grades and test scores—and highlight what inspired you to choose your intended major. In this blog post, I'll walk you through how to approach the Purdue supplemental essays with clarity and confidence.Supplemental essays are writing prompts that most competitive colleges and universities require in addition to the Common App personal statement. They help a college get to know you more specifically, not only as a student but as a potential member of their community.For more information on supplemental essays and the role they serve in college admissions, check out our Ultimate Guide to Writing Supplemental Essays.But what exactly are the Purdue admissions officers looking for in their supplemental essays? Generally speaking, the Purdue admissions team is looking for applicants who demonstrate a strong sense of alignment with the Purdue core values and mission and who will bring individuality and commitment to their area of study. Read on in order to understand more specifically how you can best approach these essays.The current Purdue supplemental essays consist of two separate responses, each 250 words. The questions are relatively straightforward, but in order to stand out from the crowd, you should approach them with precision and individuality.1. How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom?2. Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected.Not sure how to approach your response? This blog will delve into what each of these questions is really asking. This question is asking candidates to speak specifically about their own interests and the connections that they hope to form with those interests at Purdue. It's a classic "Why This College?" essay and is one of the most common supplemental essays.A mistake that many students make is approaching this question too generally. Colleges expect students demonstrate that they have done significant research into their desired schools. Are there particular classes in the program that are exciting to you? Is there a professor who you are dying to do research with? Is there a prominent alumni base or significant career support for graduates? These are all starting places from which students can base their research.There is a huge difference between responding to this question by speaking generally about your passions and providing specific examples of how the opportunities at Purdue will help you to grow.For example, "I will play basketball on campus" could apply to any school. However, "As captain of my varsity basketball team, I've learned the value of both camaraderie and healthy competition, so I look forward to joining the Purdue Club Basketball team and supporting the fundraising initiatives so that more students can enjoy building community through collegiate sports" provides character insight AND shows you did your homework.Other examples of statements that are too generic for this essay include:"Purdue's renowned engineering program is a great fit for me.""I look forward to taking a range of classes.""I want to join several clubs to make new friends."While examples that paint a vivid picture of you as a prospective student include:"At Purdue, I'm especially drawn to the School of Mechanical Engineering's hands-on approach, and I hope to join the Purdue Electric Vehicle Club to explore sustainable design solutions.""Purdue's focus on interdisciplinary learning excites me—I'm eager to pair data science with humanities courses to better understand how technology impacts human behavior and decision-making.""After leading a community cleanup initiative at my school, I'm excited to join Purdue's Sustainability Council to continue making a tangible impact and meet students who share my passion for environmental protection."The more specific you can be about helping the college imagine who you are and who you could be on campus, the stronger this essay will be! Please note that the essay prompt specifically asks you to touch on experiences both in and outside of the classroom, so make sure you answer the entire question.This second question asks applicants to reflect upon their reasons for choosing their prospective major, otherwise known as the "Why Major?" essay.In order to prepare a strong answer, we first need to delineate the difference between a "field of study" and a "major." A field of study is a general topic of study, such as literature or mathematics, that may include many different sub-categories. Fields of study are always lowercase. A major is a specific program at a specific college or university. It consists of a course list, faculty members, and program goals. Therefore, majors will be capitalized in your college essays: for example, "Modern English Literature", or "Mathematics and Logic". This is all to say, make sure that you are discussing a major at your college and not just a general field of study.A common mistake students make when answering this question is relying too heavily on their passion without any real evidence to back it up. While it's great to show excitement for your prospective major, simply saying you've always had an interest in science, literature, or engineering isn't enough. Admissions officers want to know that you've actively explored this interest through classes, school clubs, job shadow opportunities, internships, independent projects, competitions, etc. A successful essay will clearly show how you've engaged with the subject in a meaningful way and how those experiences shaped your academic goals.If your passion for your major truly began in childhood, it's perfectly fine to start with the origin story that proves your long-standing interest. However, keep in mind that the majority of your response should focus on more recent history. Write about high school experiences that demonstrate your growth, persistence, and commitment to the major.The Purdue supplemental essays have a limit of 250 words. Many students have a difficult time writing responses that both meet the word limit and also thoroughly express their strengths and desire to attend Purdue.Here's one trick: allow yourself to overwrite. On your first draft, you should give yourself the space and freedom to thoroughly answer the questions. That may mean that your writing goes over the word count at first, and that's okay! It can be hard to generate ideas and edit your essay at the same time, so we don't recommend trying to do both at once. Separate your tasks as writer and editor. After your writing is done, go back in with your "editor" hat and conscientiously remove the phrases and ideas that do not directly answer the question. This should help simplify your task of meeting the word limit.Making the most of the two Purdue supplemental essays means being thoughtful, enthusiastic, and specific. Remember, the goal is to give Purdue a clear picture of the kind of student you'll be on campus, so take the time to craft responses that authentically represent you.Still uncertain about how to best approach your Purdue supplemental essays, or college essays in general? A HelloCollege essay coach will provide guidance to ensure that your writing stays on track and that you not only meet your word limit but also your deadlines. Having an outside eye can help ensure that your responses are thorough, individualized, and well-written. Schedule a free consultation with us today! First-Time College Students (Freshmen) Required minimum-maximum word count: 250-650 Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome? Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you? Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more? Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design. Purdue Questions Respond in 250 words or fewer. How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. The Requirements: 2 short answers of 250 wordsSupplemental Essay Type(s): Why, Short AnswerHow will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? (Respond in 250 words or fewer)This is basically a super short Why essay and the best way to answer it is to do your research. If you set aside an hour to crawl through the school website and jot down the things that appeal to you, you'll end up with a pretty comprehensive list of things that are relevant to your interests. Write down literally everything: courses, professors, clubs, traditions, you name it! You'll put this information to good use in this essay and the next one. When you've finished your research spree, group your notes thematically, and pick a small cluster to cover in this brief essay. For example, let's say you love creative writing (we get you). You might describe how taking a combination of English and history classes will help you write the Great American Novel, while joining an improv group in the meantime will sharpen your wit and creative thinking. College is a time to explore, so show admissions just how you plan to do that. Space is limited, so don't worry about getting too detailed about your major and professional goals. You'll have an opportunity to do that in the next short essay you write.Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. (Respond in 250 words or fewer)We told you! Can we predict the future? Did we read all the questions before writing this guide? Who is to say? At any rate, now is the time to get nerdy. This prompt is all about your intellectual curiosity, but also your ambition for the future. There are so many reasons to pursue a degree in economics: because you've always wanted to apply your interest in math to the real world; or because you're gunning for a career in finance; or even because you want to make policy one day. No one is more or less valid than the other, so first and foremost, be honest about your reasons. Then refer to your notes to fill in the details with colorful examples. In a short essay like this, you've got to shoot from the hip, so be specific and succinct. What makes Purdue the ideal place to pursue your dream? How will their offerings and opportunities inch you towards your goal? "I got accepted into Purdue! Thank you so much for all your help with Purdue, the Common App, and all the other essays. I'm incredibly grateful for your support!"– CEA Student, Purdue, Class of 2028"My son's guidance counselor said they have not read a more honest and sincere application in many many years. Kudos to you."– CEA Parent, Purdue, Class of 2026 Purdue University is one of the most prestigious public research universities in the United States, attracting thousands of applications each year. While academic scores and extracurriculars matter, one of the most critical components of your application is your supplemental essays. These essays offer an opportunity to showcase your personality, passion, and alignment with Purdue's values. In this blog, we'll guide you through the process of writing compelling Purdue supplemental essays, break down the latest prompts, provide expert tips, and even share a sample response. Let's dive into everything you need to know to make your application stand out.Supplemental essays are additional questions or prompts required by Purdue University as part of your application. Unlike the Common App personal statement, which is general and sent to all colleges, Purdue's supplemental essays are specifically designed to assess your fit for the university. These essays help the admissions committee understand your academic goals, interests, and potential contributions to campus life.Purdue receives a high volume of applications, and supplemental essays play a key role in distinguishing one applicant from another. They allow you to:Demonstrate your interest in Purdue.Explain your choice of major.Highlight how you align with Purdue's mission and community.Offer context that may not be apparent in your academic record.Reflect your communication and writing skills—critical for college success.Strong essays can tip the scales in your favor, especially if you're competing for a selective program or honors college placement.Here are the current Purdue University supplemental essay prompts for 2025 admissions:How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? (100 words)Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. (100 words)These short responses require clarity, focus, and precision. You don't have a lot of space, so every word counts.Prompt 1: How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? (100 words)What It's Really Asking: Purdue wants to know if you've done your homework. They want to see if you understand what they offer and how it aligns with your goals.Tips to Answer Effectively:Mention specific academic programs, professors, research opportunities, or clubs.Link Purdue's resources to your interests and career goals.Be concise but detailed. You only have 100 words.What to Avoid:Vague statements like "Purdue is a great school."Repeating your resume.Generic interests that don't connect with Purdue specifically.Mini Example: "As an aspiring aerospace engineer, Purdue's renowned School of Aeronautics and Astronautics excites me. Participating in the Zucrow Labs and joining the Purdue Space Program will allow me to explore propulsion research while collaborating with like-minded peers. Outside class, the Purdue Electric Racing team offers a creative outlet that blends engineering with teamwork."Prompt 2: Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. (100 words)What It's Really Asking: What sparked your interest in your intended major, and how have your experiences led you to this decision?Tips to Answer Effectively:Share a personal story or defining moment.Highlight specific experiences like classes, projects, internships, or hobbies.Show passion and a sense of purpose.What to Avoid:Choosing a major just because it leads to a high-paying job.Being too broad.Failing to show a clear connection between past experiences and future goals.Mini Example: "A high school robotics competition sparked my fascination with mechanical systems. I became obsessed with designing efficient gears and programming motion. My summer internship at a local machine shop deepened my understanding of the field. Pursuing Mechanical Engineering at Purdue will let me build upon this foundation and innovate in real-world settings."1. Be Authentic. Your voice should come through clearly. Don't write what you think the admissions officers want to hear. Instead, write what genuinely matters to you. Sincerity resonates.2. Do Your Research. Mention Purdue-specific resources such as:Faculty members or research labsHonors College opportunitiesClubs, student organizations, or campus eventsInternships and co-op programsUse Purdue's website to find information that aligns with your goals.3. Tailor Your Response. Your essays should be unique to Purdue. Avoid copying essays from other applications. The admissions team can tell when a response is generic.4. Keep It Concise. With only 100 words per prompt, get straight to the point. Eliminate fluff and redundancy. Make every sentence add value.5. Show, Don't Just Tell. Use vivid examples or experiences to support your statements. This makes your essay more memorable.6. Draft and Revise: Write multiple drafts. Get feedback from teachers or mentors. Read your essays out loud to catch awkward phrasing or unclear ideas.Being Too Generic: Saying you want to study engineering because it's "cool" won't cut it.Repetition: Don't reuse the same ideas in both essays.Neglecting Word Count: Make sure you stick to the limit.Typos and Grammar Mistakes: Proofread carefully. Even minor errors can hurt your impression.Missing the "Why Purdue" Angle: Admissions officers want to know why you're choosing their school.Overusing Buzzwords: Avoid clichés and trendy phrases that don't say anything unique about you.Prompt: How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom?Sample Response: "At Purdue, I look forward to enrolling in the EPICS program, where I can collaborate on community-based engineering projects. Courses like ENGR 132 will strengthen my problem-solving skills, while research under Dr. Qiao's lab can deepen my understanding of sustainable energy. Off-campus, Boiler Gold Rush will help me transition smoothly and connect with peers."Why It Works:Mentions specific programs (EPICS, ENGR 132, Dr. Qiao's lab).Shows alignment with personal and academic interests.Reflects enthusiasm for both academic and social life.Purdue supplemental essays may be short, but they hold significant weight in your application. Use this opportunity to present your unique story, passions, and goals. Be intentional, do your research, and let your personality shine through. With the tips and examples provided in this guide, you'll be well on your way to crafting essays that leave a lasting impression on the Purdue admissions team.Remember: writing is a process. Don't rush it. Reflect on what drives you and how Purdue fits into your future vision. Ready to get started? Grab a notebook and start brainstorming—your path to Purdue begins with a powerful story, told in just 100 words at a time.Each essay should be no more than 100 words. Be concise and impactful.You can use similar themes, but tailor each essay specifically to the Purdue style. Mention programs or faculty unique to Purdue.Absolutely. Especially for competitive majors, strong essays can help you stand out. Known for its highly ranked engineering program and huge array of academic programs, Purdue University is an excellent public university to consider for college. To apply here, though, you will need more than just good grades—you will need to write unforgettable essays as part of the Purdue supplement. In this guide, we go over the current Purdue essay prompts and offer helpful tips on how to write each Purdue supplemental essay you're required to submit. Feature Image: Wes Jackson/Flickr What Is the Purdue Supplemental Essay? Freshman applicants to Purdue are required to submit two short answers; there's also one optional longer Purdue supplemental essay. You must additionally write an essay in response to one of the Common Application or Coalition Application prompts, depending on which application system you apply through. In total, then, you'll be writing three to four Purdue essays of varying lengths. For each Purdue supplemental essay, you'll get a specific prompt to answer. (By contrast, the Common App/Coalition App personal essay offers you multiple prompts to choose from.) Every Purdue supplemental essay prompt has its own word limit and angle. Here are the prompts for the 2022-2023 application cycle: [OPTIONAL] Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences. (250 words max) How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? (Respond in 100 words or fewer.) Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. (Respond in 100 words or fewer.) The first Purdue supplemental essay above must be no longer than 250 words, whereas the two short answers may only be up to 100 words. Note that there is no minimum word count for any of the essays. Now, how can you ensure you're writing your best Purdue supplemental essay possible? Every Purdue University Essay Prompt, Analyzed In this section, we'll look at each Purdue University essay prompt in more detail and give you tips for writing a highly effective response. This first Purdue supplemental essay is all about your activities. Purdue Supplemental Essay Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences. As a reminder, this longer Purdue supplemental essay can be up to 250 words and is optional (though we highly recommend answering it). The prompt here's pretty straightforward: just give a bit more detail about one of your extracurricular activities listed on your application. The activity you choose could be pretty much anything, from a sport or instrument you play to an animal shelter you volunteer at on weekends. The admissions committee at Purdue asks you to elaborate on one of your activities because they want to see other facets of your personality and learn more about what drove you to do a specific activity. The key is to pick an activity or experience that has helped define you in some way. The best activity to choose is one that showcases an important and unique quality of yourself, such as your leadership skills, your can-do attitude, your adaptability, etc. You should also be heavily passionate about the activity you choose. Here are examples of activities you could write about for your Purdue University admission essay: Hobbies Sports Clubs or organizations you're a member of Volunteer service Arts and music Work or internships Family responsibilities Any activity or experience that is meaningful to you When trying to decide on an activity, it might help to ask yourself these questions: Do you have a story to tell about this activity? How has this activity positively impacted or influenced you? If you're still doing this activity, why is that? What about it makes you want to keep doing it? Have you already written about this activity in another Purdue essay? If so, consider choosing a different topic for this essay. Don't feel obligated to pick your most "impressive" activity either. For example, maybe you've been figure skating competitively since middle school and have won many big national awards, but you'd rather write about your more recent experience with trying out for and making your school's basketball team after realizing you wanted to get involved in a new sport. Be sure to explain what the activity is, when/how you started it, and what kind of meaning it holds for you. You won't have a lot of room here (just 250 words!), so make sure to keep the focus on its significance. Purdue Short Answer 1 How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? (Respond in 100 words or fewer.) This first Purdue short-answer question is essentially a mini "why this college" essay that's asking you to answer the basic question, "Why Purdue?" A cogent essay will answer these two questions: What does Purdue offer academically that makes it a good fit for you? What does Purdue offer in terms of extracurriculars, student clubs and sports, professional connections, contests, etc. that makes it a good fit for you? Note that you don't need to go into much detail about your major here, as that's what the second short answer is for (see below). But you will still need to identify two key points about Purdue (one academic, one non-academic) that drew you to apply to this university specifically. To start, do some research on the university by browsing the official Purdue website. Look for any defining features that stand out to you, such as a professor with whom you wish to work, a course you can't wait to take, a club you'd like to join, a study abroad program you want to do, etc. Think about how these qualities, both academic and non-academic, could help support your own aspirations, whatever they may be. For example, maybe you visited a Purdue art gallery and felt inspired to apply after realizing, as an artist yourself, just how much Purdue values creativity and freedom of expression. Finally, be extremely specific here. You want it clear that your essay is about Purdue only. So use actual names and places while avoiding generalizations that can apply to other colleges! Purdue Short Answer 2 Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. (Respond in 100 words or fewer.) This second short-answer question is all about your intellectual curiosity. Admissions officers want to know not only why you have selected your major, but also how studying this major at Purdue will help you achieve your goals. Like the Purdue supplemental essay above, you don't have a lot of room here (just 100 words!), so you'll need to be concise but effective. While it's great to mention how you got interested in your field, you should also try to steer your response toward your academic and professional goals. What do you plan to do with your major once you graduate? How will Purdue help you do this? For example, perhaps you've been fascinated by bugs since you were little and now plan to major in insect biology. In your essay, you could talk about what propelled your interest (perhaps a bully tried to shove an ant in your face once, but instead of being scared, you were enamored with the insect's tiny body), mention what you've done to further that interest (e.g., taken some classes and built your own ant farm), and then discuss how the insect biology program at Purdue gives you the opportunity to do real fieldwork and participate in the College of Agriculture's Career Fair so you can find jobs in pest management. How to Write a Great Purdue Supplemental Essay: 4 Tips To wrap up, here are four tips to help you write a great supplemental Purdue University admission essay. #1: Write Succinctly and Purposefully All three Purdue supplemental essays you need to write are pretty short, with one 250-word essay and two 100-word essays. You'll have to really use your space wisely if you want to produce solid and memorable essays in the end. This means that you should practice being more concise. If you have a tendency to go on and on or add way too many details or flowery language to your writing, take some time to practice writing more directly and more crisply. You likely won't have enough room to throw in any extended metaphors, so don't even try—just write honestly about your passions and goals. Additionally, be sure to cut out any words, phrases, or sentences that don't directly answer the prompt or reveal more about you as a person. You might feel that your writing is boring, but as long as you're telling your story openly and with real emotion, you're sure to write an unforgettable Purdue essay. #2: Be Extremely Specific One thing lots of students struggle with in their college essays is being specific enough. Especially when it comes to such short essays, you want to ensure you're telling admissions officers the most important and essential information you can give them about yourself. Remember, they already know the basics about your achievements—they can see your test scores, grades, and extracurriculars. But what they don't have is a clear understanding of what makes you you. It's your job to paint this picture for them. For example, don't just write that you want to major in Jewish studies because you're Jewish. What specifically drew you to this major over all the others out there? Maybe you had a special experience that cemented your connection to Jewish history and culture, or maybe somebody you deeply admire inspired you to research your ancestry, making you want to use this knowledge to support and empower other young Jews like yourself. Whatever you choose to write about for your Purdue essays, just be sure that you give admissions officers the "what" and "why." #3: Always Bring It Back to Purdue As we saw with the Purdue supplement essay example we analyzed, it's critical that you bring your essays (mainly the two short answers) back to Purdue and why this school is ultimately a good fit for you, your talents, and your ambitions. Avoid bland, meaningless compliments, such as "Purdue is very prestigious," and instead focus on the unique and specific aspects that you believe make this school worth applying to. Here are some qualities of Purdue you could mention in your essay(s): A professor whom you wish to work with A specific class you're excited to take A piece of equipment, facility, lab, etc. you really want to use Opportunities for career building, such as its 30+ annual career fairs Schoolwide competitions or events you want to take part in A student club or organization you plan to join Its emphasis on inclusion and diversity Its vocal support of the arts Regardless of what aspect of Purdue you choose to focus on in your response to the Purdue University essay prompt, just be sure to tie this characteristic back to yourself somehow and explain how it will help you achieve your goals. #4: Polish It Up Our final tip is to spend ample time editing and proofreading each Purdue essay you write. Once you've written a rough draft, put the essay away for a few days. Then, take it out again and look it over with a fresh set of eyes. Note any irrelevant, incorrect, or unclear places and edit as needed. Do this process a few times until you have a fairly clean draft. Next, hand your essay off to someone you trust, such as a parent or teacher, and ask them to read it over and edit for content, structure, and grammar. Use their feedback to tweak your essay until you're satisfied with how it sounds. Right before you submit your application to Purdue, proofread your essay one final time. Follow these tips and you're guaranteed to have one great Purdue supplemental essay! What's Next? Want to learn more about what it takes to get into Purdue? Then check out our Purdue admission requirements page to see what GPA and SAT/ACT scores you'll need to aim for. Applying to other colleges in and around the Midwest? Then it might help to look at our college essay guides for Notre Dame, UIUC, and the University of Michigan. If you're getting ready to write your long Common App essay, you'll definitely want to read our in-depth guide to all Common App prompts and how to answer them effectively. Purdue University is a renowned public research institution especially known for their College of Engineering. Their storied alumni include astronaut Neil Armstrong, comedian Jim Gaffigan, and NASCAR driver Ryan Newman, among others. Every year, tens of thousands of applicants hope to follow in their footsteps. If you're hoping to nail your Purdue supplemental essays, then you've come to the right place. Let's dive in. Purdue University only asks its applicants to write two short supplemental essays. Although these prompts may look simple, there are few tips and tricks that help you take your essays to the next level. First of all, here are the prompts: How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? (250 words or fewer) Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. (250 words or fewer) Receive edits in as little as 24 hoursLEARN MORECONSULTANTS FROM The Purdue supplemental essays are academically focused, with some room to discuss other aspects of college life when responding to the first prompt. For these reasons, it's important to focus your responses on academic topics. In addition, when possible, make your responses specific to Purdue. The key to making your responses specific to Purdue is research, research, research. Look through course catalogs, department webpages, and other online or paper resources you have available to you. If you know any Purdue alumni, you may want to ask them questions about their experiences. Understanding the unique qualities of Purdue that will support your academic journey, and then describing those qualities in your essays, will greatly strengthen your application. This is your chance to show the admissions team why you're excited about applying to Purdue. In other words, this is your "Why Purdue?" essay. According to Purdue's Common Data Set, their admissions team considers the applicant's level of interest when making acceptance decisions. Therefore, demonstrating how interested you are in attending Purdue could make or break your application. How can you demonstrate interest in Purdue in this essay? First, you'll need to clarify your interests to the reader. Then, you'll need to point to the opportunities at Purdue that relate to these interests of yours. As discussed in the "General Tips" section of this article, research will be key to making your response to this prompt shine. When possible, name specific programs, professors, courses, or other opportunities at Purdue that will support you on your academic journey. Ideally, you show the reader why Purdue is uniquely fitting for your academic interests and personal ambitions. What does Purdue offer that most schools don't? Once you identify the unique offerings at Purdue related to your interests, you can explore them in your essay. If you have space, feel free to connect those opportunities at Purdue to your future career or other goals. Demonstrating how Purdue's curriculum and extracurricular offerings will benefit you post-graduation will show the reader your forethought and maturity. This question is simple, but difficult. Most applicants struggle to identify a particular moment when the topic of their chosen major became important to them. If you do have a particular moment in mind, then that's great. In this essay, take the time to explore that moment and how it continues to impact your academic journey to this day. That said, your choice of major might be the result of a series of life experiences and interests, rather than a single "aha!" moment. Moreover, many students select a major on their college application without much confidence that they'll stick to it once they get to campus. If that sounds like you, you're not alone! According to the National Center for Education Studies, about 30% of students change their major in college at least once. Whatever the case, you definitely have at least a couple reasons for choosing your major. Before you begin this essay draft, try to write down ten reasons for choosing your major. That might sound like an excess of reasons, and it is, for the purposes of writing this essay. But it's a useful brainstorming exercise. After creating your list, you might realize that some of your reasons can be recombined into a few more nuanced reasons. You may also want to brainstorm occasions when this particular subject has brought you joy or fulfillment. In your essay, you can dive into these moments and build your narrative around them. Think broadly: has there been an occasion when you have seen someone with a degree in your field of interest make a positive impact on the world? If so, that moment could be part of your essay. You could write about just one moment, or you could cover a few. Moreover, don't feel restricted to describing a single reason behind your major of choice. That said, there's nothing wrong with focusing on a single source of inspiration, if that is true to your experience. In sum, look into your past experiences, plural, to guide the progression of this essay. If you're having trouble deciding which moment(s) to focus on, try free-writing to figure out which topics you find most meaningful to explore in your writing. If you need help polishing up your Purdue supplemental essays, check out our College Essay Review service. You can receive detailed feedback from Ivy League consultants in as little as 24 hours. Want to get a better sense of what Purdue is looking for? You'll find an extensive, by-the-numbers look at Purdue's offerings, from enrollment and tuition statistics to student life and financial aid information, on its Common Data Set. For deep insights into how this public research university envisions its role and how it wants to grow and evolve, read its Foundations of Excellence Report (it's 74 pages ... yikes ... but you can skim). Reading through this will give you a strong idea of what Purdue values and how those values may be shifting. BUT, please don't just copy and paste chunks of the plan into your essay because a) that's plagiarism and it's basically an academic crime, and b) anyone could do that. Think about this: What aspects of Purdue's plan speak to you? From reading the report, you would also discover that most students are admitted into one of Purdue's highly individualized bachelor's degree programs. So, if you have a clear sense on what you want to study and crave a strategic path to your future career, perhaps as an engineer, Purdue may be right for you! Think about what resonates with you and keep reading to find out how you can connect the dots. How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? (250 words) Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. (250 words) Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the alternate major you have selected. (Respond in 250 words or fewer.) Explain your vision, ideas, or goals for how you hope to shape your honors experience while at Purdue. Please put this in the context of the four pillars which are the foundation of the Honors College. (500 word maximum) Please describe the interdisciplinary nature of your chosen field of study and how it complements or supports other fields. (Examples: You might describe how your work in a liberal arts career may impact or inform the work of an engineer.) (500 word maximum) How will opportunities at Purdue support your interests, both in and out of the classroom? (250 words) This is a very short variation on the "Why us?" prompt (an essay you'll see quite a few schools require). Because it's so short, the key will be finding 2-3 reasons that set Purdue apart from all the other schools you're applying to and focusing on connecting to your academic and non-academic interests. Here's the "Why us?" essay guide—in this case, the Cornell example is a good one, but it's pretty long, so be sure to check out the Tufts example too. Here's the short version of the guide, to (hopefully) pique your interest:Spend 1 hr+ researching 5+ reasons why Purdue might be a great fit for you (ideally 2-3 of the reasons will be unique to Purdue and connect back to you).Make a copy of this chart to map out your college research.Create an outline for your essays based on either Approach 1, 2 (recommended), or 3 in our full guide above.Write a first draft!As you write, try to avoid these common mistakes: Six Common Mistakes Students Make on "Why Us?" EssaysMistake #1: Writing about the school's size, location, reputation, weather, or ranking.Mistake #2: Simply using emotional language to demonstrate fit.Mistake #3: Screwing up the mascot, stadium, team colors, or names of any important people or places on campus.Mistake #4: Parroting the brochures or website language.Mistake #5: Describing traditions the school is well-known for.Mistake #6: Thinking of this as only a "Why them" essay.Below is a great sample essay for this prompt. (written when the word count was 100 words.)Example:Recently, to become part of the "Smart Cities Initiative", my hometown was awarded a $50 million grant. I wish to research robotics and autonomous sensing at Purdue's Smart Informatix Laboratory. Specifically, mentorships such as "Smart Cities" (EPCS 10100) with Dr. Mohammad Jahanshahi will allow me to contribute to other prospective smart cities. Additionally, I am passionate about music, specifically the violin. Purdue's philharmonic and symphony orchestras will satisfy my musical desire and introduce me to people who carry similar interests. Organizations like the Purdue Music Producers (PMP) will connect me to like-minded individuals who share my passion for music production.— — —Tips + AnalysisIf you have a specific academic focus in mind, consider including it. This student directly states his interest in researching robotics and autonomous sensing and takes it a step further by demonstrating he's done his research and knows that Purdue has a Smart Informatix Laboratory. If you read the Provost's Report linked at the top, you'd know that something unique about Purdue is its highly individualized bachelor's degree programs and that most students are admitted into these. What that means is robotics + autonomous sensing is much better to reference than engineering or a more general interest. Dig through Purdue's list of majors and get specific. Pick an academic and a non-academic interest: The prompt asks you how Purdue will support "your interests, both in and out of the classroom," so you want to make sure to pick at least one academic interest and one non-academic interest. Why? Because the golden rule of supplemental essays for college is to answer the question. This student combines robotics and autonomous sensing with an interest in smart cities (academic + research) and music, specifically violin. He takes it a step further by showing exactly where he'll fit in as a violin player at Purdue: "Purdue's philharmonic and symphony orchestras" and the Purdue Music Producers club. PSA: Try to avoid using the word "passionate," as this is one of the most frequently used words in college essays.Here's another example for this prompt, written for Barnard, which shows how you can use the longer word count for Purdue:Example: I grew up near the birthplace of the riotgrrrl movement, inspired by zines and women who refuse to minimize themselves. When I read about Barnard's zine library, I was ecstatic. Barnard's pedagogy embodies zines' same spirit of fighting injustice, giving women the skills and close-knit community to fulfill their potential.With Barnard's flexible curriculum and dedicated professors, I can pursue all my interests without sacrificing in-depth analysis for interdisciplinary freedom. I'd explore mathematical cognition during early development with Koleen McCrink while discussing circular economy models with Sandra Goldmark. Within the sociology department, I'd examine my family's roots by taking Politics and Society in Central Eastern Europe and investigate the theories fueling activism in Social Movements. With opportunities like externships and BCRW's Interrupting Criminalization initiative, I'd navigate the world holistically.Barnard empowers women to learn boundlessly. In the collaborative spaces of the Milstein Center, I'd develop my screen-print projects and my fluency in web development. Upholding Barnard's commitment to environmentalism, I'd love to join the SGA Sustainable Initiatives Consulting Board. From workshops on salary negotiation to seminars on women in leadership, Barnard offers me the necessary tools to thrive in my multidimensional life.In the middle of explaining first-year curriculum, my Barnard tour guide stopped to point out the newly installed "I Am Queen Mary," going off-script to highlight how crucial continued decolonization is. In that vignette, I found the riotgrrrl attitude alive at Barnard--a community of unafraid women, passionately speaking their minds and eager to change the world.— — —Tips + AnalysisShow how you and Barnard share key values. In any Why Us, it's useful to show how you and the school align (Pro tip: checking out a school's mission statement is a great way to do this). Keep this Values Exercise handy as you write, and identify a few you believe Barnard shares. The essay above is packed with shared connections: In her excitement over Barnard's zine library, for example, the writer shows creativity, self-expression, community pride, and a thirst for knowledge. Likewise, in defining her own understanding of Barnard's pedagogy, she reflects key values—meaningful work, justice, community, helping others—while her description of Barnard's flexible curriculum shows her appreciation for freedom, personal growth, and self-expression. This passage is particularly effective in helping the reader visualize how those shared values would benefit this student's experiences on campus: "Barnard empowers women to learn boundlessly. In the collaborative spaces of the Milstein Center, I'd develop my screen-print projects and my fluency in web development. Upholding Barnard's commitment to environmentalism, I'd love to join the SGA Sustainable Initiatives Consulting Board." Show a range of interests/engagement. Notice that this prompt is not just asking about your chosen major or your academic interests. So after talking about, say, courses and professors and programs that interest you, you can also talk about aspects of campus life—clubs, activities, sports, and other extracurriculars—that you feel will help you grow. This is a great way to show that while you're a serious student, you're interested in other things too. For this student, it wasn't just the curriculum that drew her to Barnard; it was also the school's "commitment to environmentalism," its workshops, seminars, and externships, and especially its "community of unafraid women, passionately speaking their minds and eager to change the world."Be specific. Notice too how this student doesn't stop at generalities like "flexible curriculum and dedicated professors" or how "Barnard empowers women to learn boundlessly." She backs them up with specifics unique to Barnard—from professors (Koleen McCrink and Sandra Goldmark) to courses (Politics and Society in Central Eastern Europe) and other academic opportunities (BCRW's Interrupting Criminalization initiative) to avenues for personal growth ("collaborative spaces of the Milstein Center") and community involvement (SGA Sustainable Initiatives Consulting Board). These details are critical to showing Barnard not only that you've done your homework in researching what the school is all about, but that you've given serious thought to why it's a good fit for you—and you for it. Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the major you have selected. (250 Words) This is another super short variation of a classic supplemental essay: the "Why Major?" essay. You'll find a step-by-step guide to writing this essay at this link, which we recommend reading through, but here's the short version:Step #1: Imagine a mini-movie of the moments that led you to your interest and create a simple, bullet-point outline.Step #2: Put your moments (aka the "scenes" of your mini-movie) in chronological order, as it'll help you see how your interests developed. It also makes it easier to write transitions.Step #3: Decide if you want to include a specific thesis that explicitly states your central argument—in this case what you want to study and why. This thesis can be at the beginning, middle, or end of your essay.Step #4: Write a draft!Here's an example for this prompt written for when the word count was 100 words:Example: Having attended college Physics classes every Saturday for a year, I've embraced the wisdom from centuries-old mathematics and the vast potential of computers, a realization I can honor by pursuing Computer Science and Mathematics. Much of my interest in AI lies in its basis in the human brain, which I can pursue in a Psychology concentration. And Electrical Engineering allows me to connect the virtual world with the physical, as I currently do in robotics. Purdue will fuel my interdisciplinary interests that stem from my curiosity about connections between the materials and systems in the world around me. (98 words)— — —Tips + AnalysisConsider naming your major at or near the start. You don't need to be completely straightforward ("I plan to major in X"), but if you're struggling to come up with a compelling hook, keep it simple and move forward. Value information over poetry. Consider expanding (briefly) on what you'll explore outside the major-specific classes you'll take. Purdue has niche major/research opportunities, for example. This student also adds to his major in Computer Science and Mathematics with a concentration in Psychology and additional interests in Electrical Engineering, which shows he might be a good fit for Purdue's highly specialized academic programs. Briefly say why you became interested in this major. Following the "Why Major?" outline above will help with this step. This student tells us that his interest began after taking college physics classes every Saturday for a year (bonus points for taking this on outside of school). If you have room, say how you'll contribute to society in the future. Show how you'll use the knowledge you'll gain at Purdue to help make society (or your community, or the whole wide world) a better place in a specific way. This student plans to push the fields of AI and robotics further using his cross-disciplinary knowledge. We know, that's a lot to do in just a few words. You don't have to do all these things; just do your best.And here's an example written for Princeton that could easily double here, showing how you could use the larger word count now allowed.Example: At the WEST Society of Women Engineers Robotics workshop, I programmed a robot to dance and learned about using AI to map the ocean floor and track sharks. And next door, I tested the stress strength of a gummy worm, learning about sustainable nanomaterials for the first time. These simple, yet engaging experiments showcased intriguing hands-on experiences I am seeking at Princeton.Princeton's focus on independent research and its requirement of a senior thesis promise to deepen my knowledge of engineering and science.Through the Materials Science and Engineering (MSE) Program and the Princeton Institute for the Science and Technology of Materials (PRISM), I will conduct research combining expertise in "hard" materials with knowledge of "soft" materials. Under Professor Nan Yao, I hope to utilize techniques of imaging and compositional analysis to construct organ transplant biomaterial, bettering the lives of others. Observing materials in action at the Shiseido Cosmetics Factory will provide me insight that I can use to showcase my knowledge by creating a keepsake at the annual blacksmith event. While Materials Science allows me to explore the physical world, Computer Science allows me to explore the virtual one. As a selected participant for the Girls Who Code Summer Immersion Program, I developed a sisterhood through navigating coding difficulties. I will create new sisterhoods with Princeton Women in Computer Science and Society of Women Engineers.Princeton greats Olga Russakovsky and Gillat Kol inspire me to further my knowledge at Princeton. I can't wait to follow in their footsteps. (249 words)— — — Briefly discuss your reasons for pursuing the alternate major you have selected. (Respond in 250 words or fewer.) Andrew Simpson, CEG's Editorial Director, has worked as an educator, consultant, and curriculum writer for the past 15 years, and earned degrees from Stanford in Political Science and Drama. He feels most at home on mountain tops and in oceans.Top Values: Insight/Growth | Truth | Integrity Purdue is a school where the non-scary acceptance rate figures are not truly indicative of just how competitive the admissions process actually is. This public land grant research university in Indiana is actually a draw for students from around the world—out-of-staters apply at three times the volume of Hoosier State residents. Highly renow

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