This essay is 43 words over the limit. Please help!! This was a truncated version of the common app essay (previously proofread and edited by matahari and matthew). Pasted final version of the common app as well down below. Thanks!!

*“Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it.''*

It was back at 2014’s Moonshine Jungle Concert Tour that I started dreaming.

Showers of fireworks, laser lights, and silver confetti filled up the stage. Bruno Mars picked up his surf-green Fender Stratocaster and casually sang "Our First Time” as he greeted his hysteric fans. The whole stage shook at his presence. Loyal fans chanting his name. They would jam to his record for hours. *I wanted to be like him someday.*

Throughout high school, I would perfect a couple of songs with my school band, even signing up for intensive courses from expert musicians. Music videos would be repeated over and over until I can improve my guitar techniques. I also learned stage performance skills, from having confident gestures to vibrant expressions. My dream grew into an ambition and turned into an obsession.

My band and I would join several competitions and perform in front of famous judges. However, although I performed with fine techniques and entertaining stage performance, the judges criticized my performance as soulless. *What have I been missing*?

One night, as I was studying, my parents had a massive argument and I overheard my 11-year old brother crying softly in his room. In an instant, I was by his side, comforting him.

He kept on crying. Not knowing what to do, I took my guitar and played Hillsong’s “Cry of the Broken” to help soothe him. After a while, his demeanor lightened. He started playing FIFA again.

Looking back at that night, I may not remember what my parents were quarreling about, but I’ll always remember that subtle yet clear epiphany about playing a guitar. It comforted my brother, and it felt...great.

I realized what I have been missing. As I only focused on improving my techniques and stage performance skills, I overlooked on what’s most important as a guitarist; that is to have a sincere and genuine heart. People would be touched when I pour out my heart and express my emotions as I play, giving bigger satisfaction to other people in uncountable ways.

When my close friend gets stressed, I would play our favorite Backstreet Boys song and sing them together.

When my school is competing in tournaments, I would encourage and hype them up with Queen’s classic “We Are the Champions” or The Beatles’ “Come Together”.

I decided to keep this new mindset and use my guitar as an act of expressing myself better, and to encourage and motivate other people through different situations.

Six months later, I was given the opportunity to perform on Sunday church services for 300+ people. I was happy, but not as happy as I thought I would be. I realized that I don’t need to have huge concerts to move hundreds of thousands of crowd at once; it is more important that I could use my guitar to spread my message and make a positive impact to my closest circle.

Helping my friends with their homework. Singing together with friends and family. I now see everything big picture, a process, instead of a series of ambitions to fulfill.

In the end, I may not have Bruno Mars’ 22.1M Instagram followers, but I know that I touch the audience when they say “I know it was you playing”, even when they do not see me.

543 words

Hi Daven!

Reading your prompt puts a smile on my face. I’m really happy that you went through the experience with your brother, because I believe that indeed music touches people in uncountable ways. I think this is great!

Here are a few things I would suggest:

* I would suggest that the 3 paragraphs highlighted yellow to be shortened to maximum 2 paragraphs – as a very brief background of how you were before the experience.
  + If that still does not make the word count, I would suggest to cut the part highlighted green.
* I think the last sentence could be made better. You talked about how you realized that playing guitar was giving people satisfaction through a personal and emotional touch – how you could help brighten people’s mood and create a more comfortable and positive atmosphere. I think it would be good if you relate it to this ☺

Overall, it’s a great experience and essay you have here! ☺

Common app essay for reference

Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realisation that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

It was back at 2014’s Moonshine Jungle Concert Tour that I started dreaming.

Showers of fireworks, laser lights, and silver confetti filled up the stage. Bruno Mars picked up his surf-green Fender Stratocaster and casually sang "Our First Time” as he greeted his hysteric fans. The whole arena was in awe at his presence. Loyal fans were chanting his name, jamming to his hits for hours.

*I wanted to be like him someday.*

Day and night, I would practice new techniques and riffs. I signed up for intensive courses from a lead guitarist of a local rock band. YouTube videos ranging from ACDC’s “Back in Black” until Wes Montgomery’s jazz licks would be repeated over and over until I got the feel of it. At school, my carefree soul would hum randomly during lunch, only to experiment with a new melody in my head. It came to a point where my dream grew into an ambition, and ambition turned into obsession.

August 2017. My teacher invited me to join an audition for my church’s youth band.

*Here is my chance!* My first milestone was in sight. I perfected two songs and performed in front of locally renowned band members, only to receive a rejection notice shortly after. The news struck me real hard. It was *only* an audition for a church band, and I failed. Was my hard work not enough?

I felt miserable, dejected.

One night, as I was studying, my parents had a massive argument and I overheard my 11-year old brother crying softly in his room. In an instant, I was by his side, comforting him. I took my guitar and played Hillsong’s “Cry of the Broken” to help soothe him. After a while, his demeanor lightened. He started throwing balls at me again and we played FIFA on the PlayStation.

Looking back at that night, I may have not remembered what my parents were quarreling about, but I’ll always remember that subtle yet clear epiphany about playing guitar. It comforted my brother, and it felt...great.

I realized that my dream of electrifying stage after stage as lead guitarist was just one mere road out of the myriad of paths I could have pursued. Music – brought to life through instrumental media, personalities and emotions – can all be synergized in conjunction to connect with people in uncountable ways.

When my close friend is stressed, I would play our favorite Backstreet Boys song and sing them together.

When my school is competing in tournaments, I would encourage and hype them up with Queen’s classic “We Are the Champions” or The Beatles’ “Come Together”.

When I’m having a huge fight with my girlfriend, we would calm down, breathe, and reconnect with each other through music, even before we start speaking again.

I decided to employ this new mindset and use my guitar to not only encourage and motivate other people in different situations, but also use it as a means of self-expression.

Six months later, during the second round of auditions, I finally got accepted to my church’s youth band. I was happy, but not as happy as I thought I would be. I don’t need to have huge concerts to move hundreds of thousands of a crowd at once; it is more important that I could use my guitar to spread my message and make a positive impact starting with my closest circles.

Looking further, I started noticing a change with which I approach all other aspects in my life. Be it my pursuit for academic excellence or career goals, I now possess my very own pair of bird’s eye view to see the bigger picture instead of just a series of ambition check boxes to tick off.

My end goal is to no longer be a part of Bruno Mars’s next world tour. It is to headline my own, lifelong heart-to-heart rendition wherever I go.

Alternate personal essay: daven’s advice

Jangan tentang financial problems

Focus on other things how u communicate with owner or founder of company

Mreka ngeyel

Gamau dengerin walaupun salah

Not showcasing in terms of financial analysis

The point is in everything else

Communication, negotiation,

Surrounding the business problem itself

Not only fixing the problems

When facing clients, other skillsets juga perlu (reflection basically how i learn about these skillsets rather than the knowledge or academic interest itself)

Devi’s comment:

Good try! There are more content in there, but I think we need to reduce the cliche parts.

Essay prompt:

* Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realisation that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

Essay theme: Don’t get obsessed with just one thing, otherwise you will miss out on other things that could be a lot more meaningful to you. Always keep in mind the bigger picture so you have a wider horizon / view towards anything.

Personal brand to highlight: always trying to be a better version of yourself (driven, ambitious) but not obsessive, committed (always try to finish what you started), value people

Essay outline:

Opening:

That first three paragraph → combine it into one - two paragprah.

Maybe you can just talk about the brunomars concert briefly, and say that one day you wanna have your own concert.

Body:

You started working hard since then (describe how), and then you get your first chance to have your own stage during an audition for a church band. And then you failed. (describe how you feel, your thoughts, etc)

Describe how you motivate yourself (what went through your mind etc), how you do things differently. (DRIVEN AND COMMITTED)

* When I failed, I did not stop and keep on practicing harder until I’m accepted at the church audition

Climax:

Talk about how did you learn about focusing on why you like playing guitar in the first place -- to comfort people, to express your own feelings, to share your arts; not about fame

* Along the way, as I’m practicing harder, I feel much more enjoyable to play guitar when I could use it to personally create new moments and memories (examples of experience) rather than just to perform in a big crowd.
* Examples: Self-expression, encouraging other people, comforting other people

Resolution:

Talk about what you learned, how your values / perspective change; talk about what’s truly important to you.

* What’s most important is to accomplish the goal, but to enjoy the process of achieving the goal in different ways.
  + Examples
    - Comforting a depressed friend (stressed about school and personal)
    - Giving encouragement to school teams through playing guitar
    - Having quality time and getting to know friends and family deeper
    - One time when I’m fighting with my brother, I used guitar as a way to comfort and reconnect, solving our issues
    - Being an ice breaker for family and friend gatherings
    - Bringing my parents closer to God through guitar
* It feels satisfying and comforting —> There are many ways you can go in fulfilling your dreams, not only by playing in huge crowds
* Although I don’t have my own concert where I’m playing in front of huge crowds cheering and waiting for your guitar solos, I know that my guitar is personalised and is touching for my families and friends in different ways
  + Motivating
  + Encouragement
  + Creating deep quality moments
  + AND THAT IS A BIGGER SATISFACTION FOR ME

Potential Outline:

* Watching a cool band concert
  + Bruno Mars on March 2014 (Moonshine Jungle Tour)
  + Doo?Wops & Hooligans
  + being invited by parent
* Being a guitarist could be so cool
  + Watch how people use guitar to pick up girls
* Started touching a guitar, and practice couple of song riffs
* One night, imagined being in a stage being famous and performing an incredible guitar skills in front of thousands of crowds
* Started to audition for youth band —> GET REJECTED (only one musicians picked)
* Hope down, dreams crushed
* Church mentor explain that music can be used to impact other people
  + I started remembering small details of how I impacted other people with guitar
    - Comforting a depressed friend (stressed about school and personal)
    - Giving encouragement to school teams through playing guitar
    - Having quality time and getting to know friends and family deeper
    - One time when I’m fighting with my brother, I used guitar as a way to comfort and reconnect, solving our issues
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