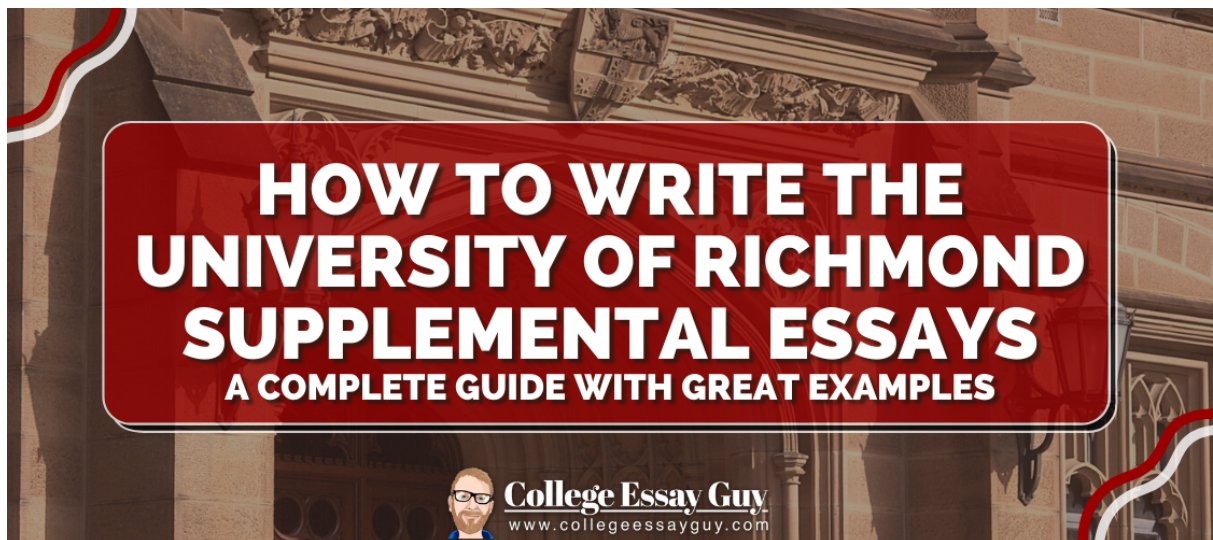


How to Write the University of Richmond Supplemental Essays: Examples + Guide 2021/2022



Impact. If you're looking for one word to describe what drives the University of Richmond, that's it: impact.

As the only university in the country with a spider mascot, Richmond isn't afraid to stand out and embrace its uniqueness. And school officials want to attract students who aren't hesitant to do the same.

Among the school's core beliefs is that the "things we bring on day one—our talents, our passions, our viewpoints—are what equip us to make that impact." So it's no surprise that Richmond's supplemental essay prompts are specifically designed to elicit from you both the things that make you unique and the qualities that will help you make a splash—on campus and in the world beyond Richmond.

If you want an even better sense of what the University of Richmond is looking for, you'll find an extensive, by-the-numbers look at its offerings, from enrollment and tuition statistics to student life and financial aid information, on its [Common Data Set](#). And for insights into how the university envisions itself and its role, and how it wants to grow and evolve, read its [strategic plan](#), which will give you a strong idea of what the University of Richmond values.

WHAT ARE THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS?

U RICHMOND SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

Please respond to one of the prompts in 350-650 words below.

- 1. Tell us about the most unusual talent you have, and how you have made it useful.*
- 2. Spiders are essential to the ecosystem. How are you essential to your community or will you be essential in your university community?*
- 3. Please share one idea for actions or policies that you think would begin to address an issue of racial or social injustice.*

HOW TO WRITE EACH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

HOW TO WRITE U RICHMOND SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

Please respond to one of the prompts in 350-650 words below.

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2. Spiders are essential to the ecosystem. How are you essential to your community or will you be essential in your university community?
3. Please share one idea for actions or policies that you think would begin to address an issue of racial or social injustice.

TELL US ABOUT THE MOST UNUSUAL TALENT YOU HAVE, AND HOW YOU HAVE MADE IT USEFUL. (350-650 WORDS)

One prompt in and you may already be feeling overwhelmed, thinking, “There’s nothing unusual or unique about me.” *Au contraire*, friend. There’s something wonderful and unique about *each* of us—you may just not have realized your one-of-a-kindness yet. But we’re here to help you find and celebrate it.

Pro tips for getting started:

“Unusual” is a relative term. Your talent doesn’t need to be *America’s Got Talent*-worthy to be the subject of a killer essay. You don’t need to compare your talent to those of everyone else in the world to deem it “unusual.” Instead, think of it like this: Of all your talents, which is your most unusual? It can be serious, or it can be silly. But whatever it is, it needs to say something about who you are and what you’re about.

Talent doesn’t always come naturally. Your amazing talent can be something you’ve worked hard to identify and develop. Even Taylor Swift has had a little help along the way, and there’s nothing wrong with that. She found what she liked to do and was *good* at, and she worked hard to be *great* at it. Now, if you were just *born* insanely awesome at something, that’s fabulous too (and, we admit, we’re a little jealous).

Watch your tone. While this prompt is your chance to brag, don’t be braggish. The difference? Keep humble when discussing your achievements. That means objectively showing how you’ve developed your talent over the years, what you’ve learned along the way, *and* how you’ve developed it in a way that you’ve used it to unselfishly serve others.

We don’t have a Richmond-specific essay to share with you, but we’ve got the next best thing: a solid example that works well with just a few tweaks—including additional detail to bring it up to the minimum word count.

Example:

When it comes to thinking randomly, I am your guy, and as a result, I am lethal at the game Scattergories. Scoring ten points per round isn’t good enough for me: eleven is my minimum. I frequently transpose this spirit of competitiveness onto the playing field as a three-varsity-sport athlete. However, sports didn’t always come easily to me.

I was a chubby kid growing up, and high athletic performance eluded me...until I started lifting weights. Weights provided a source of dedication for an undedicated “athlete.” Not only was I able to boost my athletic ability, but I also boosted my self-confidence on and off the field.

Confidence goes a long way, especially when it comes to arguments. Confidence has molded me into the avid debater and devil's advocate that I am today. No matter how insignificant the topic, no matter its incredulity, I will passionately argue my point of view until all is lost.

This never-say-die attitude has done me wonders on the chess board, where aggressive play is often rewarded, but no matter how many national championships I have played, chess has always been greater than just moving pieces across a board. The game has built my character and engaged my brain in a way in which nothing else was capable, and the community—especially my 70-year-old Russian Grandmaster coach—has taught me integrity, perseverance, and analytical problem solving.

This eclectic collection of unique traits makes up a living Scattergory card that defines the adventurous person I am. (247 words)

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Tips + Analysis

Use the word count to your advantage. A 350- to 650-word essay range is pretty wide, which may lead you to ask, “Should it be shorter or longer or somewhere in between?” To which we enthusiastically say, “YES!” Let us explain. As with *any* essay, we encourage you to take as many words as you need to effectively tell your story. Obviously, you’ll need to adhere to minimum and maximum word counts (so this student would need to add detail to meet the 350-word minimum). But don’t add sentences just for the sake of adding them, and *we beg of you*, don’t skimp on your essay because you’re all essay’d out. Admission officers notice both approaches, and they won’t earn you any points. Instead, use the word count you need to structure a thoughtful, insightful response that answers the prompt *and* shows those different sides of you.

Be creative in your interpretation of the prompt. With a prompt asking for an unusual talent, Richmond is all but begging to see your creativity here. This student opens his essay with the concept of “thinking randomly” as his talent and goes on to connect the characteristics of athletic ability, self-confidence, determination, and analytical problem-solving. It seems almost too much to get into one essay, yet he makes it all flow. The result is a direct and to-the-point essay that paints a full picture of who the student is, what’s important to him, and how they all connect. What it doesn’t *exactly* do is showcase his ability to think randomly in different situations—unless his

whole essay is just random, but related, thoughts. Then in that case, don't mind us as we go off to ponder the philosophical nature of his response.

Don't focus exclusively on your talent. How you use your talent shows admission officers more about you than the talent itself, so don't skimp on this part of your story. Sharing how you watched SO. Many. YouTube and TikTok videos to master the art of hand-lettering is fantastic. But showing how you've used this talent in a way that's meaningful to you or your community is the good stuff. Maybe you started volunteering with Meals on Wheels by decorating breakfast bags and in the process learned about food insecurity in your county, even launching an Etsy shop with your hand-lettered designs, with all the proceeds going back to Meals on Wheels. Whew. It's a lot, but it's so great. Showing how your talent has put you in touch with a new side of you, changed the way you view the world, or caused you to reflect on something bigger than you—that's how you'll impress readers. This student touches on the ways in which his "living Scattergory card" characteristics have served him outside Game Night, and the extra word count this prompt affords would've let him dive deeper into the insights each characteristic and opportunity have given him.

SPIDERS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE ECOSYSTEM. HOW ARE YOU ESSENTIAL TO YOUR COMMUNITY OR WILL YOU BE ESSENTIAL IN YOUR UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY? (350 -650 WORDS)

The spider analogy makes for an interesting segue, but the question it asks makes it pretty clear: This is a community essay prompt, with a healthy emphasis on leadership skills. To brainstorm how to write this essay, read this [step-by-step guide on the community essay](#). Here are some general tips:

Don't repeat things that the reader can find in other parts of your application. Use this essay to show another side of a previously mentioned community *or* to discuss a community you haven't mentioned. The second option is more likely the better choice. Additionally, consider including values you haven't already demonstrated.

Try to think outside the box. Which of your communities might help you stand out among other "community" essays? Being part of a "community" can take a lot of different forms. Don't limit yourself to a narrow definition. An essay on a strange talent (like juggling while jogging) or an obscure interest (like historically accurate baking, for example) might be more apt to catch the reader's attention. And, yes, those are real examples from past students.

Details! Be specific. The more visceral details you can give about yourself and the community you're discussing, the more you distinguish yourself from all the other applicants. Use memorable language and evoke unique images that will stick with the admission officers.

Since this is a new prompt for the University of Richmond, we don't have a specific example, but here's an essay, written for another school, that does a nice job of using the community essay to demonstrate the author's leadership skills.

Example:

Sitting at my desk, a rainy day in quarantine, an email arrived from a teacher: Would I join the GSS fellowship? My school's Global Seminar Series developed out of a realization that in a time of limited connection, we could harness technology for high school girls from Tanzania to Thailand to Texas to learn about and collaborate on addressing global issues. As a Fellow, I work with school administration to cultivate a network connecting 200+ students from 19+ countries to leaders in fields such as STEM, Business, and Government/Non-profit organizations.

Throughout 16 seminars, our goal is to inspire our participants and support them as changemakers. During the week, my responsibilities are planning based: brainstorming, content and resource development, and speaker outreach. During the seminars, I cultivate conversation and make sure everything runs smoothly. Saturdays, when the seminars happen, are my favorite, especially once they are over and students stay on the Zoom to chat (we're going to start holding a mid-week connection session to facilitate more of this!). One Zoominar explored the intersection of medicine and technology in the pandemic. Doctors and healthcare workers from CT to South Africa spoke of measurable and meaningful benefits of cross-boundary and cross-sector collaboration made possible by Zoom, Teams, and Azure.

Moderating our panel discussion, I was struck by the vastness over which technology supports us, despite COVID imposing geographic limitations. Later in the session, as I facilitated smaller discussions with students in breakout rooms, I wondered if, perhaps, the silver lining of Covid is knowing that when we thoughtfully utilize technology, developing a global community, we can foster otherwise impossible progress. I hope to continue developing community in order to foster innovation.

Tips + Analysis

Keep the focus on one community. While it may be tempting to want to share stories about all the diverse roles you play in different communities, don't. Identify the right community to tell a story about by first simply making a list of as many communities you belong to as you can. Look over that list. What *one* tells the most about who you are? What can you talk the most about? What shows several different sides of you? That's the community to pick. This student (wisely) picks her involvement with the GSS fellowship because it lets her highlight her networking, planning, communication, and research skills—among others.

Find the challenge. By asking how you are (or will be) essential to your chosen community, Richmond really wants to know what challenges you've faced as part of that community, what you did about them, and what you've learned from them. The way you answer this shows what unique skill set you're bringing to campus and how you're going to make an impact on those you meet and engage with. This student highlighted the challenge of building a community over Zoom (something we can all relate to, yes?) and elaborated on the solutions she's implementing, like creating breakout rooms for smaller, more personal discussions and adding midweek connection sessions to further cultivate conversation.

Pick a structure. Stories don't always need to be told with a discrete beginning and end. Life isn't always a movie with a clear-cut narrative. If your community involvement doesn't follow a sequential timeline like this student's did—moving from initial involvement to final reflection—don't feel like you have to use it. Instead, link your story thematically (learn more about [finding a common theme here](#)). If you belong to a community of camp counselors, which lessons have you learned from serving at a sleepaway summer camp, a sports camp for differently abled athletes, and a robotics camp? Same role, same broad community—but vastly different experiences, lessons, and opportunities for reflection.

PLEASE SHARE ONE IDEA FOR ACTIONS OR POLICIES THAT YOU THINK WOULD BEGIN TO ADDRESS AN ISSUE OF RACIAL OR SOCIAL INJUSTICE. (350 -650 WORDS)

It's hard to ignore the racial and social injustices in our world today. Racial injustice hit a tipping point in 2020—in large part due to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, among others. At the same time, the COVID pandemic highlighted social injustices and inequities, ranging from the

technological (significant gaps in access to computers and the internet) to medical (access to affordable, quality effective health care).

If these or other related issues keep you up at night, and you spend your waking hours pursuing actions or drafting potential policies to bring the world back in balance, this could be the right prompt for you to answer.

Through your responses, Richmond hopes to learn the answers to two critical questions:

Does this student's values align with ours?

Is this the kind of student who cares about their community and is ready to take action to improve it?

While we don't have a Richmond-specific essay to share, this essay nicely answers a similar prompt.

Example:

Growing up, I was fascinated by Robin Hood. Imagine being able to redistribute income? Yeah, I guess he did the wrong thing for the right reason, but what if we could apply that framework to eradicate poverty, specifically by guaranteeing food security to millions of people around the world?

During a discussion on GMOs, I was introduced to the relationship between food security and poverty. The connection between the two fascinated me. And, after witnessing the plight of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, I found my calling as an advocate: laborers left at sunrise in date farms, forced to sow earth that can't provide them with basic necessities. I soon realized the effects of seed privatization on farmers worldwide.

Capitalism and its allies are exploiting the Global South, undermining its development and hurting vulnerable bread and butter workers. These tenets, which are heavily rooted in slavery, colonization, and forced labor, have equipped multinational corporations like Monsanto, DuPont, and Syngenta to stand as new colonizers as they dominate more than half of the seed market. Monsanto, alone, controls nearly 95 percent of cotton seeds through its GMOs, devastating thousands of Indian farmers.

Prior to the industrialization of agriculture, farmers would simply set aside a portion of seeds after harvest for the following year. As a result, seeds would return to their rightful owners without the cycle being interrupted. However, after the

monopolization of the seed market, the number of available plants to farmers narrowed significantly, limiting their sources of income and food supplies while further perpetuating poverty.

I believe giving farmers seed freedom and rolling back the corporate monopolization of biodiversity is key to eradicating poverty in developing countries. In order to combat the global food crisis, it is essential that governments intervene to minimize the privatization of seeds. By regulating overhead costs like seed transportation and promoting locally based companies, seeds can be channeled more effectively and securely. This can result in the diversification of seed supply systems and the development of a new seed pipeline.

By creating government policies that balance the relationship between the seed market and corporations, as well as equipping individuals with resources to farm independently, we can take from rich corporations to generate local sources of income, feed millions of families, and take one step forward towards a more equitable world, Robin Hood style.

And some day, in addition to being a helping hand to others, I hope to become the first hijabi U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, a journey I embarked on at Georgetown University. (423 words)

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Tips + Analysis

Have a plan. If you've ever thought, "Why couldn't we help by ...," in response to an injustice, this a great place to lay out your plan and outline the steps to address and resolve the issue. But if your plan isn't more well-thought-out than, "We should just be nicer to each other," this might not be the right prompt for you to respond to. This student shows she's given thoughtful consideration to both the problem *and* the solution and offers clear action steps and government policies that will move the world toward a more equitable future.

Offer a personal anecdote. If you had a first- or second-hand experience with domestic abuse that resulted in your involvement at a local women's shelter and lobbying for changes to laws in your community, consider sharing it. Your personal stories—whether they're something you've experienced, something you've witnessed, or just something that resonates with you—add a layer of depth to your essay and show the reader that, yes, this *is* something I've thought about and that's important to me. While this student isn't a farmer personally impacted by seed freedom, the research

she's done and the solutions she's outlined demonstrate just how important the topic is to her and how we are *all* affected by it in some way.

Stay middle-of-the-road. When you don't know the political, social, philosophical, or other leanings of your reader, it's best to stick to a topic that's neither too conservative nor too liberal. Some students would say that a school isn't right for them if it doesn't respect or support their strong opinions, and that's a fair declaration. But we know you've done your research, learned that Richmond is a well-respected liberal arts school in a liberal city, and decided to apply. Even with these understandings, a topic that falls too far right *or* left could alienate readers instead of convincing them to be your champion. This student chooses a meaningful topic—encompassing farming, seeds, and food security—that's important but not especially controversial.

KISS (or, in this case, Keep It Serious, Students). While many prompts offer the opportunity for students to showcase their personality, this isn't the one for showing off your humor or sarcasm. Instead, put your critical thinking, social awareness, and problem-solving abilities on display while taking a thoughtful, serious approach to the prompt. This student does just that—offering a staid response that matches the tone of the prompt.