

How to Write the Tufts Supplemental Essays: Examples + Guide 2022/2023

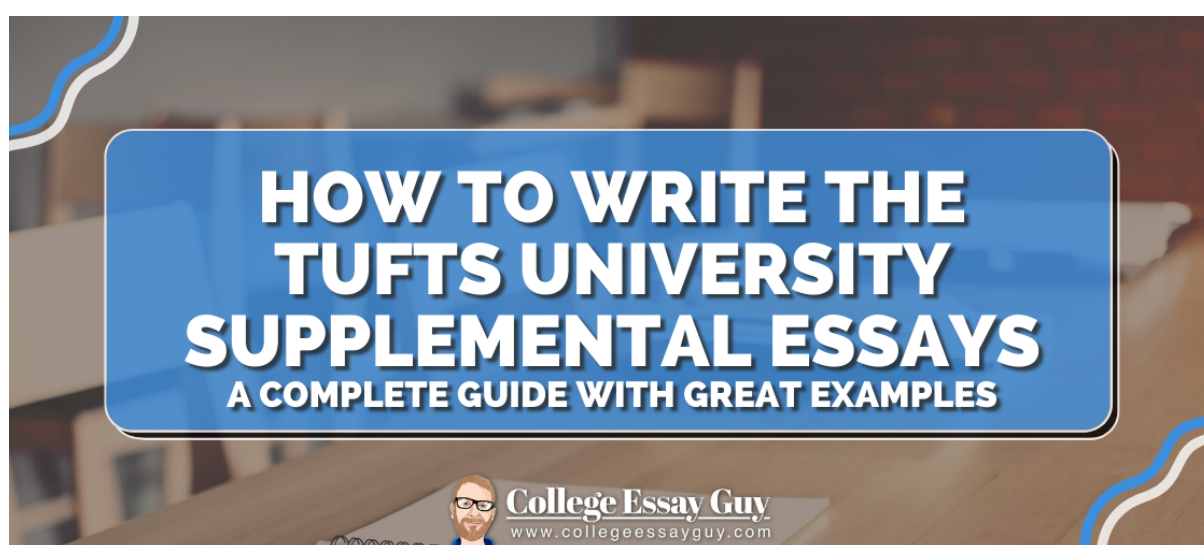


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If you're reading this, chances are you're familiar with the three-ring circus that is college admissions, and these Tufts supplements may feel like yet another hoop to jump through. You may *not* be familiar with the fact that ringmaster P.T. Barnum was an early founding trustee and benefactor of Tufts, or that the college's mascot, Jumbo the Elephant, was his circus' biggest draw in the late 19th-century.



Yup, *The Greatest Showman* co-founded Tufts.

We considered the circus life, but we're better at taming college essays than lions.

Thankfully, you only need to respond to two short Tufts supplemental prompts, which you can complete by either a) pulling content from essays you've already written and customizing it for Tufts, or b) re-using what you write for your Tufts supplementals in other supplemental essays.

Want to get a better sense of what Tufts is looking for? You'll find an extensive, by-the-numbers look at Tufts' offerings, from enrollment and tuition statistics to student life and financial aid information, in its [Common Data Set](#). For deep insights into how this private research university envisions its role and how it wants to grow and evolve, read over its [Strategic Plan](#).

WHAT ARE THE TUFTS SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS?

Applicants to the School of Arts and Sciences, School of Engineering, and 5-Year Tufts/NEC Combined Degree answer the following two questions:

PROMPT #1

Which aspects of the Tufts undergraduate experience prompt your application? In short, "Why Tufts?" (100-150 words)

PROMPT #2

Think outside the box as you answer the following questions. Take a risk and go somewhere unexpected. Be serious if the moment calls for it, but feel comfortable being playful if that suits you, too. Pick one of the following (200-250 words):

1. *It's cool to love learning. What excites your intellectual curiosity?*
2. *How have the environments or experiences of your upbringing – your family, home, neighborhood, or community – shaped the person you are today?*
3. *Where are you on your journey of engaging with or fighting for social justice?*

HOW TO WRITE EACH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR TUFTS UNIVERSITY

HOW TO WRITE THE TUFTS SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY #1

Which aspects of the Tufts undergraduate experience prompt your application? In short, "Why Tufts?"
(100-150 words)

This is a *super* short "Why us?" essay.

Because it's so short, the key will be finding 2-3 reasons that set Tufts apart from all the other schools you're applying to.

Here's the "Why us?" essay guide—in this case, check out the Cornell example to understand the effect you want your short "Why us?" to have without all the length. We do talk a bit about possible approaches for tackling the shorter version of this essay, and there's a nice older Tufts example as well.

Even though it's short, this essay should focus on unique reasons that you and Tufts connect.

Try to avoid these common mistakes:

Mistake #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 recent Tufts essay for prompt #1.

Example:

My interest in Tufts began with bubbles. On a campus tour, our guide talked about blowing bubbles with her roommate at 1am and watching them freeze. The tour was actually five years ago when I accompanied my sister on a campus visit. This story highlights what excites me about going to Tufts: the students share an intellectual curiosity that carries beyond the classroom into the friendships and memories they create. After imagining myself at Tufts for five years, I can clearly see myself there. I will use my own intellectual curiosity to research infectious diseases in Dr. Aldridge's lab, learn about nuclear nonproliferation in Nuclear Weapons and International Politics, and teach Climate Action workshops on the climate change-social justice intersection. Although my interests are diverse, I know Tufts will not only support my freedom to explore, but encourage it.

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Tips + Analysis

Paint a vivid picture. Bubbles freezing in midair is a memorable image, and memorable is exactly what you want. Bonus points that the story came from a campus visit five years prior, which shows the author's demonstrated interest over time. If you choose to reference a college visit or tour, take the extra time to research the name of the admissions rep or guide you met and make a clear and specific explanation, or "so what?" as to why that information is relevant to your desire to attend. And heads-up: *You totally do not have to visit campus in order to write a great "Why us?" essay*, as you'll see from the example below. If you can't visit campus, you can search for [virtual campus tours](#), [webinars](#) with admissions officers, or simply Google "a day in the life of a Tufts student" to find great short video clips and interviews that will help you visualize yourself there and provide great potential "Why us?" references.

Name one clear value. Even though this is an undergraduate prompt, intellectual curiosity happens to be #1 on the list of values for Tufts' School of Medicine. This is no coincidence given her expressed research goals, and with such a small word limit, this student cleverly chose to ground her short essay in a value that's shared by both Tufts and herself. Make sure to keep your whole list of [core values](#) handy as you peruse Tufts' strategic plan, mission, and values statements to see what lines up for you.

Connect specific wants to specific resources. Despite the length, the author manages to name her desires to contribute to Dr. Aldridge's infectious disease lab, learn about nonproliferation in a class on nuclear weapons, and teach extracurricular climate activism workshops. Use your internet research superpowers to find the most specific resources possible, and make sure they overlap with interests you've described elsewhere in your application.

Here's another example essay (that's not about visiting the campus) that also works well:

Example:

At Tufts, I will major in Environmental Studies, choose the track of Environmental Policy and research under Professor Ninian R. Stein to find out effective ways to use community resources for sustainable development. Afterward, I will participate in the Tufts Civic Semester under Tisch College at Urubamba, Peru to learn about how NGOs address sustainable development and community health issues. Back at Tufts, I will apply my classroom and study abroad knowledge to my Yuanyang project (see additional info), become a Tisch International Project Summer Fellow, and minor in Entrepreneurship to upscale the project into a mature social enterprise that can address the sustainable development issues at the villages. After all, Tufts is also the place I can have fun! With its close-knit community, Quidditch games and novel experimental college courses such as The Avengers and Beyond (seriously?), I cannot find a better place where I want to belong.

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HOW TO WRITE THE TUFTS SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY #2

Think outside the box as you answer the following questions. Take a risk and go somewhere unexpected. Be serious if the moment calls for it, but feel comfortable being playful if that suits you, too. Pick one of the following (200-250 words):

1. It's cool to love learning. What excites your intellectual curiosity?
2. How have the environments or experiences of your upbringing – your family, home, neighborhood, or community – shaped the person you are today?

3. Where are you on your journey of engaging with or fighting for social justice?

Our favorite of these is the second one. Why? As we mentioned in the intro, if you've written (or are writing) other essays for other schools that express important parts of who you are, you can probably re-use that essay for this prompt. [Here's a guide on how to re-use essays](#) (and maybe save yourself 20+ hrs on this process).

Whichever questions you choose to answer, keep in mind that Tufts Assistant Director of Admissions Paz Pitarque advises that "admission counselors can see when you have dedicated a lot of your time to your supplement. It also helps us see what kind of community member you will be and just how excited you are about Tufts!"

Below are some well-crafted essay examples for this prompt.

Example 1 (Responding to Option 1):

Diseases intrigue me more than anything. My interest started in sixth grade when I learned about a small Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Every day I would go straight home from school and Google news articles about the outbreak. Ebola both terrified and fascinated me. My sixth-grade self worried the outbreak would consume the entire region and never stop spreading. I was fascinated by how such a small virus could cause such irreparable damage. The methods Doctors Without Borders and the WHO employed to try and contain the virus also caught my attention. I took note of what worked and what didn't. I was also very surprised by the lackluster global response to the outbreak.

My interest in Ebola led me to learn about other diseases. After studying Zika, MERS, Nipah, and hemorrhagic diseases such as Lassa Fever, I have realized that the world is grossly underprepared for the next pandemic. Other global issues such as climate change will only exacerbate disease outbreaks. For example, rising temperatures will allow mosquitoes to have a greater range and cutting down forests will expose us to zoonotic diseases. Even the richest nations do not invest enough in disease surveillance and many nations do not have the infrastructure to deal with a large-scale outbreak.

Whether I am petitioning world governments or researching new vaccines, I want to help prepare the world for the next pandemic. That's why my dream job is to study and raise awareness about diseases as an epidemiologist.

Tips + Analysis

Share the origin story of your interest. This student takes us all the way back to the sixth grade to show where the curiosity began. Then we get vivid details that paint an image in our mind of the student Googling about this interest for the first time. Like this essay demonstrates, your goal is to **SHOW** us the journey of how and why you developed your intellectual curiosity. How old were you when your curiosity began? Where were you? What actions did you take that visually demonstrate that the thing making you curious had you hooked? Try to answer these questions to create a vivid origin story.

Connect your interest to something bigger. Curiosity tends to build by going from one thing to another, right? Next, you'll want to show what problems or issues prompted you to explore further. This student delivers on this need by talking about how an interest in Ebola led to an exploration of how climate change influences disease outbreaks. This makes it easy for the reader to imagine how this student might draw connections from different academic disciplines while on campus. And that's exactly the kind of thinking admission officers want to see in the incoming freshman class.

Bring it back to your goals at the end. Remember that every essay you write needs to answer the question, "So what?" For this prompt, the best way to do that is to connect your intellectual curiosity to one or more of your academic, personal, or professional goals. This student does exactly that by connecting her interest in diseases to her dream of becoming an epidemiologist who helps prepare the world for the next pandemic. So, in the end, we don't just learn about a random curiosity, we learn about her aspirations for the future.

Example 2 (Responding to Option 2):

The last sliver of the sun disappears over a perfect wave as I ride toward shore.

My beautiful home should have made me an idealist, but no...

I'm a pessimist.

I was raised on science, not faith, and pessimism is a possible side effect.

I brush my teeth, climb into bed, and think about our future rising sea levels and supervolcano eruptions. I can't ignore the fish migrations caused by climate

change that will ultimately doom my home and, eventually, our world. But, though I know the world is doomed, I love this world, and I'd do anything to prevent it from utter destruction.

I joined forces with my sworn enemies, the optimists, with Heal the Bay's Pier Aquarium and MPA watch, spreading messages of environmental protection while teaching the community about ocean creatures and monitoring wrongdoing at local beaches.

I intensified my battle by interning with UCLA's LCC Civil and Environmental engineering lab, which designs sustainable building materials. My project focused on the dissolution kinetics of calcite with organic ligands at high pH to simulate cementitious environments, and my results have applications for sequestering CO₂.

Knowing the future doesn't make me want to give up, instead it makes me want to test the limits of what I can accomplish. Unlike my optimistic counterparts, I have accepted what's coming, so I'll be ready, at least more ready than anyone else, to stop the unstoppable.

And if I fail, what does it matter? That asteroid was totally coming anyway!

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Tips + Analysis

Give a glimpse into your world. Using the [21 Details exercise](#), this particular student took a few carefully chosen details about his life and centered them around an unexpected reveal: "I'm a pessimist." Wielding dark humor, the author lightens his subject matter with references to his "sworn enemies, the optimists," and thoughts about supervolcano eruptions at bedtime. If humor isn't your strong suit (we can't all be funny), pick an interesting detail and tell the story around it in a way that spotlights a different part of the portrait you present of yourself in the personal statement. On an application packed to the brim with serious experiences and accomplishments, this essay can be a breath of fresh air.

Show a side of yourself that's not already apparent in your application. Since pessimism is generally not considered to be a positive trait, we're willing to bet this student didn't mention it anywhere else. By taking that calculated risk and explaining how his world view connects with why he fights for the world he loves so much, however, he reveals a vulnerability that will make him a valuable peer at Tufts beyond his academic acumen

and work ethic. Is your application full of focused long-term research? Share something spontaneous and creative. Is there another important value that's not coming through elsewhere in your activities list or personal statement? Make sure it's coming through in a supplemental essay. In short, what e/se could you show?

End with a clear “so what?” After *showing* he values humor, this author makes sure the reader leaves with a takeaway: “I have accepted what's coming, so I'll be ready, at least more ready than anyone else, to stop the unstoppable.” These supplementals are short, but don't be afraid to show first, *then* tell the reader what's important to understanding you and why.

Example 3 (Responding to Option 3):

For my senior project, I am creating a chapbook of poetry, photos, letters, and drawings concerning teenage sexuality. Through these media, I investigate how teenage experiences of learning and exploring sexuality are different for people of all genders, at various stages of growth, and with different backgrounds.

I've written poetry for quite a few years, largely independently. It's a way for me to reflect on my experiences, both emotional and physical, through imagery. I practice darkroom photography and pencil drawing to process my experiences as well, creating pictures that narrate my viewpoints on different aspects of life. I will incorporate these art forms into the book to complement the writings with a visual perspective. My final project will be a forty or fifty page work, which I plan to submit to Perugia Press.

The intention of my work is to explore how psychologically intense this period of growth and realization is for many teenagers, by delving into issues ranging from masturbation and self-love to virginity and the emotional consequences of sex. Through honest and open depiction in words and art, I hope to take a stand against the stigmas that still impede adequate sexual education, safety, and health care, and that inhibit the experience of pleasure and comfort around sexuality.

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Tips + Analysis

Share something only you can share. Unless you have some incredibly unique story or perspective, any essay about an issue in the current news cycle risks sounding generic. So, if you're going to write about a common social justice issue, you need to make sure your angle is unique. This student takes a common issue (teenagers exploring sexuality), then

connects it to the creation of a chapbook that specifically explores “how psychologically intense this period of growth and realization is for many teenagers, by delving into issues ranging from masturbation and self-love to virginity and the emotional consequences of sex.” Even if another student writes about teenage sexuality, it’s hard to imagine they also can talk about making a chapbook, or a chapbook with this narrow context. Or, if that doesn’t work for you, brainstorm a topic by asking yourself these questions: What’s an issue you think people don’t talk about enough? What’s missing from the conversation?

Show how you engage with this issue. The advice of “show, don’t just tell” should be on your mind whenever you write a college essay. And this one is no exception. This student’s essay stands out because she doesn’t just say why issues regarding teenage sexuality are important. Instead, she shows her commitment by bringing us into her creative process, whether that’s writing poetry or developing pictures in the darkroom. Think: What actions demonstrate my commitment? What do I do to engage with this issue that others might not?

Describe the impact you hope to make. You’re young and only one person, so admission officers aren’t expecting you to solve social inequality. But they do want to get into your mind and see how you think about your contribution to the cause. By communicating these thought processes, and your actions to deliver on them, you make it easy to imagine how you might make an impact on campus. This student shares that she continues to use art to “explore how psychologically intense this period of growth and realization is for many teenagers.” Again, it’s that type of connection between academic disciplines that demonstrates a readiness to tackle big issues in college.

That’s all, folks! Come back and click deep into our blogs after checking out more [application advice](#) from the Tufts admissions team themselves.