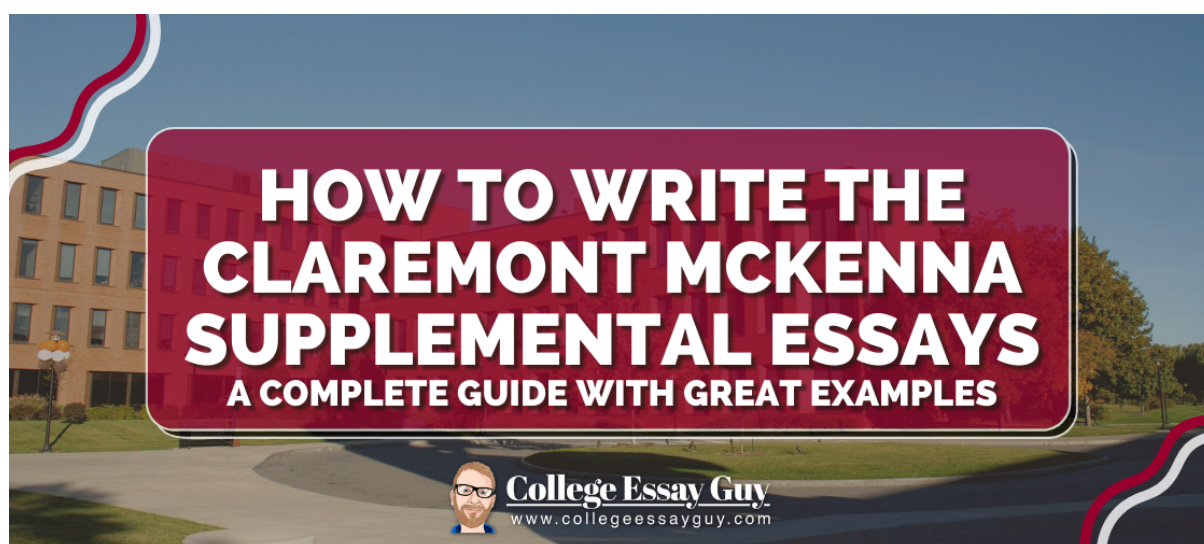


How to Write the Claremont McKenna College Supplemental Essays: Examples + Guide 2022/2023



Known for specializing in government, economics, and international relations, Claremont McKenna College is a hub for bright and ambitious students looking to make a practical difference through their careers. Students just like you. As a part of the Claremont College Consortium, CMC is connected to four other top-tier schools in the area, offering lots of opportunities to create and collaborate with other students. Although it tends to be more conservative than other nearby colleges, it has a modern campus and a dynamic environment that celebrates leadership and community. If this is an environment and focus that appeals to you, we're here to help you write the Claremont McKenna College supplemental essays.

Before you start brainstorming, want to get an even better sense of what CMC 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. For deep insights into how this private college envisions student success (and how it wants to grow and evolve), read through its most recent **self-study report**—a simple way to get a strong idea of what CMC values.

WHAT ARE THE CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS?

PROMPT #1

Why do you want to attend CMC? (150 - 250 words)

PROMPT #2

One of the hallmarks of a CMC education is the first-year humanities program that all students take in their first year at the College. The program has two components: the Freshman Humanities Seminar (FHS) and the Freshman Writing Seminar (FWS). While each FHS and FWS seminar has a distinctive approach in terms of texts and topics, their pairing gives first-year students a shared academic experience in small, writing-intensive courses that foster critical thinking about a wide range of important issues.

FHS introduces first-year students to some of the crucial questions that human beings face with relation to society and the world. Individual sections are taught by faculty from a range of departments. Past and current topics include:

- 1. Democracy and Leadership*
- 2. Women in Science*
- 3. Unconventional Thinking*

FWS, taught by faculty from the literature department, develops students' abilities in written and oral communication at the college level. Past and current topics include:

- 1. Art of the Personal Essay*
- 2. Blackness in American Cinema*
- 3. Post-Apocalyptic Humanity*

For the purpose of this essay prompt, pick one FHS or FWS seminar topic to study at CMC. What part of your personal experience—or your desire to know more about an area outside of your experience—best explains your seminar choice? (150 - 250 words)

[View the full list of FHS and FWS topics](#)

HOW TO WRITE EACH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR CLAREMONT MCKENNA

HOW TO WRITE CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

Why do you want to attend CMC? (150-250 words)

This is your classic “Why us?” prompt, though topping out at 250 words, it’s a bit on the short-ish side. We recommend checking out our [complete guide on how to write the “Why us?” essay](#) and paying close attention to the “Why Cornell” and “Why Penn” examples, which are our favorites. The “Why Tufts” essay is a good example of how to write to a shorter prompt.

Here’s the short version of how to write the “Why us?” essay:

Spend 1 hr+ researching 5-7 reasons why Claremont McKenna might be a great fit for you (ideally 3-5 of the reasons will be unique to CMC *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 the full guide above.

Write a first draft!

As you write, try to avoid these common mistakes:

Six Common Mistakes Students Make on “Why Us?” Essays

Mistake #1: Writing about Claremont McKenna’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 CMC is well-known for.

Mistake #6: Thinking of this as only a "Why them" essay.

Here's a great "Why us?" for CMC.

Example:

Through Claremont McKenna's small school environment, flexible degree structure, supportive faculty, and cutting-edge research, I will have the opportunity to take advantage of an interdisciplinary education and hands-on learning experience. I am specifically interested in furthering and combining my knowledge of economics and science.

The interdisciplinary focus of the Keck Science Department would allow me to learn more deeply in chemistry, biology, and environmental science. From Introduction to Biological Chemistry to Accelerated Integrated Science Sequence, there is no shortage of courses that I can explore. Likewise, the Roberts Environmental Center focuses on public and private partnerships where I can apply theory to practical environmental solutions that I am deeply committed to improving.

Without showing the economic value, it is often very difficult to implement scientific and environmental solutions. This is why I find economics coupled with a science degree to be so rewarding. Participating in the Dis Copenhagen Economic study abroad program would broaden this understanding through hands-on learning experiences.

Besides the amazing educational opportunities, I also admire the strong community of happy students at CMC. I particularly like the Claremont International Relations Society, Unchained, and would even look to create a sports debate club to deepen school spirit, and provide opportunities for students with similar interests. With a CMC education, I am confident I will continue to be a life-long learner, active community member, and a global citizen.

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Tips + Analysis

Try to show variety in your interests. College is about more than academics, and CMC has some robust out-of-the-classroom opportunities that can make for a well-rounded, fulfilling college experience. By broadening your "Why CMC" reasons to clubs, organizations and activities—as this student does with the Claremont International Relations

Society and sports debate club—you can show CMC that you plan to play an active role in its campus community.

Explain your impact. The author here doesn't just reference opportunities at CMC in passing; she does so with intention. Every time he brings up a campus organization or course, he explains *why* he's interested in it and *what* he'd do as a member of it. Writing about the contributions you see yourself making helps admission officers envision your impact on the campus environment more tangibly. It also shows you're thinking through your involvement in the community on a deeper level, demonstrating a commitment to CMC's core values.

Put your academic goals in the context of the larger community.

Outside the classroom, you'll also be interacting with a diverse group of people with backgrounds that may be completely different from your own. Consider thinking through how your coursework might influence places, people, and communities outside the classroom. This student emphasizes how happy and strong the community at CMC is, envisioning himself taking advantage of the collaborative culture to connect to others as a global citizen and lifelong learner. He also shares his plans to study abroad in Copenhagen and implement hands-on solutions in alternative learning environments. If you have the details, you can get even more specific, drawing on personal experience to help your reader understand the scope and significance of the impact you see yourself making at CMC.

Connect your interests to CMC's resources. This essay isn't just about you. It also isn't just about CMC. "Why us?" = why you + why CMC. So try to craft a response that demonstrates your unique interests and then connects those to what the college has to offer. This student, for example, highlights his interest in economics and science. He then connects those interests to specific opportunities at CMC, like the Roberts Environmental Center and Keck Science Department. We get a distinct sense of his excitement to engage with school resources. Getting as specific as possible about the clubs, labs, classes, majors, or professors you want to engage with will show that you've done your research—and you've found lots at CMC to be excited about.

HOW TO WRITE CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #2

One of the hallmarks of a CMC education is the first-year humanities program that all students take in their first year at the College. The program has two components: the Freshman Humanities Seminar (FHS) and the Freshman Writing Seminar (FWS). While each FHS and FWS seminar has a distinctive approach in terms of texts and topics, their

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[View the full list of FHS and FWS topics](#)

This is a really fun prompt that can help you get excited about the CMC learning environment. The key to acing this essay is to connect your chosen seminar back to yourself in a meaningful way. CMC officials aren't asking you this question because they want to hear that they're offering the GREATEST COURSES OF ALL TIME. They already know their seminars are interesting and of value—that's why they're offered them! Instead, they're looking to see what you might contribute to a class environment and what unique questions you have or intellectual pursuits you've experienced that differentiate you from the rest of the pack. Here are a couple general tips to keep in mind:

Choose a seminar you're genuinely interested in. Don't pick an option just because you think it sounds smart or would make you look better as a potential applicant. Your genuine interest (or lack thereof) will come through loud and clear on your application, so don't try to fake it.

Name the seminar. This may seem pretty obvious, but remember to actually include the name of the seminar in your response to the prompt. You can do this anywhere in the essay, but make sure it's somewhere.

Read the full course descriptions. Do your research! Look into the seminars being offered in depth and do a little digging about the professors teaching them. This will give you a sense of what you might actually be doing in the classroom as well as the kinds of questions you'd be asking through your coursework.

Connect to your values. Although this is, on the surface, a question about academic/intellectual interests, it's also about the values you find important. Draw on personal experience and think about how a specific seminar might align with aspects of your identity. Even if you're taking a seminar purely because it sounds cool and the material looks interesting, you can connect that back to values like adventure, openness to new experience, and curiosity. Every point of interest connects back to a value on a deeper level. And, if those values aren't coming to you as you're writing, maybe it's a sign you need to go back to the catalogue and look for another seminar that you connect with on a deeper level. Not sure what your values even are? Check out our [Values Exercise](#) to get started.

Here's a great example of a comprehensive response to this prompt.

Example:

Why are humans dominant? Why do we have the power to decide the fate of our universe? Do we actually have as much power as we think we do? What is man's place within nature?

I first began to question human dominance on a service trip to Tanzania, when I experienced the Maasai tribe's ceremonial goat slaughter. As the goat seized its last breath, I struggled to understand the precarious line between life vs. death. The goat's fate helped enlighten me to human beings' unlicensed power. I struggle to understand why we are the apex predator of our environment; why do we continue to consciously destroy our environment through pollution, destruction of habitats, and elimination of species?

My passion for understanding the effects of humans on our environment has led to my interest in science. I found myself intrigued by the invisible world of science, yet there is still so much we do not understand and many unsolved problems. From the stars and life beyond Earth to the solution to the possibility of manually reversing carbon emission, there is an endless possibility to our universe that I want to understand.

I am interested in taking the Science and Human Condition seminar because I strive to learn more about how humans can continue to change the medical and

scientific world, and how human discoveries have affected our universe. Will our science continue to harm our environment or are we going to aim for rehabilitation and protection of our home?

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Tips + Analysis

Ask questions (even if you don't know the answer!). This author clearly has an inquisitive spirit and curious mind. His hook is just a range of questions—why are humans dominant? Why do we have the power to decide the fate of our universe? Some might see asking questions as a form of weakness because it's a sign of not knowing something. But asking great questions is what going to college is all about! It's a space to embrace curiosity and reach a new understanding of the world around you.

Oftentimes, it takes just as much creativity and brainpower to come up with an interesting question (or 3) than it does to find a workable solution. By starting off with questions and then unpacking them later in the essay, the author here not only reels us in; he shows us his mind at work.

Highlight the “why.” Even with just 250 words, it's important to spend some time going beyond *what* seminar you're going to take and thinking about *why* you want to take it. For this student, the “why” is about understanding the hierarchy of nature on a deeper level and thinking about the effect of human dominance on the environment. His curious spirit becomes a common thread, and we get a more complete sense of how his questions mesh with the content of this particular seminar, allowing us to see how this seminar would generate new (and even more profound) areas of knowledge for him.

Highlight both the personal and aspirational. Note how the prompt asks you to draw both on your personal experience and areas that are both intriguing and unfamiliar to you. You can see both aspects at play in this author's response. He's asking questions he doesn't know the answer to, while rooting them in his experience of travel and tradition. We see his passion and curiosity melding. He has the drive to delve deeper into what he doesn't know and the self-reflection to use his past experiences to guide him.

With these tips and examples in mind, you're ready to start writing your CMC supplemental essays!