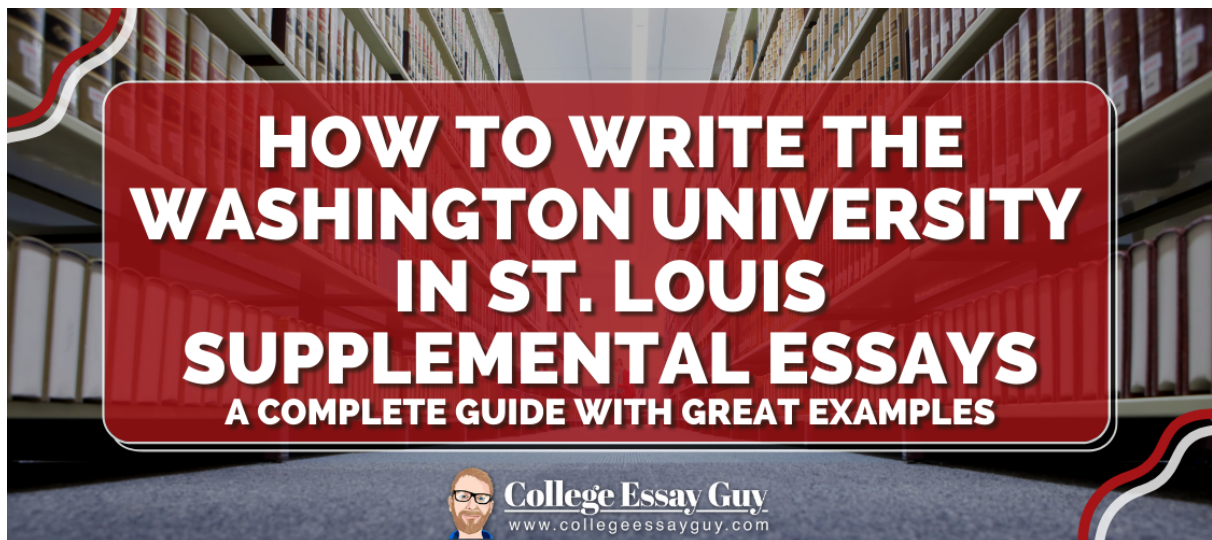


How to Write the Washington University in St. Louis Supplemental Essay: Guide + Examples 2022/2023



The Breakfast Club. Mean Girls. Clueless. To All the Boys I've Loved Before.

What do all of these popular movies have in common?

Groups. There's the jocks, the artists, the hipsters, the gamers, the nerds—the list goes on.

Washington University leaders have a different take on things than the boys and girls of *The Breakfast Club*. To them, we're all nerds in our own right, all part of the same group deep down. The WashU supplemental essay asks you to embrace your interests whether you're a self-identified nerd or not.

We're here to help you geek out. Jocks, gamers, and everyone in between.

Want to get a better sense of what WashU is looking for? You'll find an extensive, by-the-numbers look at WashU'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 private research university envisions student success (and how it wants to grow and evolve), read [its strategic priorities](#). Reading through this will give you a strong idea of what WashU values.

WHAT IS THE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT?

PROMPT #1

Please tell us what you are interested in studying at college and why. Undecided about your academic interest(s)? Don't worry—tell us what excites you about the academic division you selected. Remember that all of our first-year students enter officially “undeclared” and work closely with their team of academic advisors to discover their academic passions. You can explore all of our [majors and programs](#) on our website. (200 words)

HOW TO WRITE THE SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR WASHU IN ST. LOUIS

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Think of this as two essays in one: a “Why Major” + a “Why us?”—though at just 200 words, it's on the short side, so you'll want to be judicious about using your word budget wisely to make sure to clearly articulate both the *what* (the field of study you're interested in) and the *why* (the specific academic opportunities you plan to take advantage of at WashU).

To get you started, here's a [complete guide to the "Why Major" essay](#). And [here's the full guide on how to write the "Why us?" essay](#). When you read through the latter, pay close attention to the "Why Tufts" examples, since it was also written for a 200-word prompt.

Action Items:

Read the "Why Major" guide. What mini-movie moments do you envision exploring?

Reflect on what you want out of your college experience. Collect those insights using [this chart](#). Identifying specific or niche interests and needs will help you find equally specific resources at WashU and make your "we're a perfect match" case (see more on this in the "complete guide" link above) more compelling.

Spend at least an hour researching 5-7 reasons why WashU might be a great fit for you, mapping them out in the third column of the chart.

Remember: The best "Why us?" pieces don't celebrate how "x" school is the GREATEST SCHOOL OF ALL TIME. They're more an explanation of why you and the school are the perfect match. Make sure to connect each of your WashU examples to your goals and interests.

Create an outline that combines your mini-movie moments for the "Why Major" top, then outline the "Why us?" portion based on either Approach One, Approach Two (recommended), or Approach 3 (as explained in our "Why us?" guide).

Here's a great sample essay. Note that it was written for a previous year's prompt, when the word limit was longer, so you'll have a bit less space to work with.

Example:

In an empty subway car lies an advertisement, "Only Mount Sinai [Medical Hospital] would think of a flu shot as a once in a lifetime experience." Dr. Peter Palese found a way to target a conserved region of a rapidly-changing virus. This project would potentially produce a shot that would be effective for the next 10-15 years compared to current vaccines that are rendered ineffective after at least six months. As a future scientist committed to the world of infectious diseases, I find Dr. Palese's project captivating because it shows the constant innovations in the endless battle against the micro world.

While Dr. Palese's project is ingenious, his research reinforces the common idea that viruses are inherently bad. I believe that viruses, in some cases, can have positive effects, and I am committed to furthering this alternate perspective.

WashU demonstrates a unique commitment to researching the positive uses of viruses. The ampersand program, Phage Hunters, explores the relatively new field of "Phage Therapy." Bacteriophages address the problem of antibiotic-resistant bacteria by repurposing viruses, offering a safer treatment to bacteria-resistant illnesses.

WashU's expansive Department of Microbiology provides other access points for studying virology. By participating in Professor Wang's lab, which focuses on viral discovery, I hope to develop skills to discover new viruses and their methods of infection.

These innovative opportunities at WashU lead me into my path of becoming a researcher of viruses, which will one day help me benefit the global community in the fight against antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

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Tips + Analysis

Show deep roots. This student drops names, in a good way. Specific details like researcher names demonstrate your knowledge, authority, and (most important) interest. Dig deep into WashU's website to mine for courses, programs, professors, and other opportunities that get you excited, and show you've done your homework by weaving them into your essay.

Compare and contrast to show critical thinking. By analyzing examples of viruses as foe or friend, the student defined their research interest. They know what they want to research and where that work is getting done at WashU. This is a great example of sprinkling "why me" details in with the "why WashU." The result: a "why we are perfect for each other" essay.

Be accurate. Ampersand Courses are only found at WashU, and the name is capitalized. The field of phage therapy isn't (and doesn't need the quote marks). It may feel like nitpicking (and will it prevent you from being accepted? Probably not), but details like capitalizations matter because they show you're paying attention. Review any capped words you're using as proper nouns.

Be complete. Use full names. WashU has several doctors named Wang studying viruses. Is it Dr. David Wang or Dr. Xiaoli Wang? Before you submit, check the spelling of programs, professors, and any proper nouns.

Share your game plan. The student shows how WashU opportunities will lead to a career that benefits others in a meaningful way. Your college will invest its resources in you, so share your ideas of how your education there will benefit others. That'll help to show that you get it's not all about you, which conveys key values like compassion, community, and helping others. Speaking of which ...

Show a variety of core values. Aside from your Common App materials, this is your one chance to show WashU officials why you're a great fit for its campus. And a great way to do that is to demonstrate how your values align with theirs. If you haven't yet, read [its strategic priorities](#) and [mission statement](#) to get a sense for what's important to school leaders (hint: exploration, intellectual curiosity, and boldness are big ones), and see which resonate with you the most, then work to convey those values in your writing. Don't have a clear sense of what your core values are? Take 5 minutes to do this [Values Exercise](#).

And here's a bonus example. Note how this student starts out with a powerful hook, using a term the reader likely has never heard of, and using it to share a compelling story of how they became interested in the field of medicine. Since you won't have as much room, you may consider spending less time on the "Why Major" portion and more on the "Why WashU," given the prompt's emphasis on "at WashU and why."

Bonus Example:

Osteogenesis Imperfecta (OI) - never heard of it? I certainly hadn't. That is, prior to learning that my aunt was pregnant with my cousin Tommy. Doctors knew during pregnancy that he would have the condition.

OI is a genetic disorder that causes brittle bones, loose joints and breathing problems. In his first five years, Tommy has broken more bones than most people will in their lifetimes. Despite these challenges, he's amazing. We often FaceTime to talk about dinosaurs (a common interest of ours) or to have virtual WWE bouts with action figures (not a common interest!).

My connection to Tommy took my interest in science from deep yet abstract to something very personal. I dove into learning everything I could about genetics, OI and related disorders. I've spent as much time as they're willing to give talking to Tommy's parents and doctors and other geneticists, researching new treatments on PubMed, and pursuing applicable internships and classes. When my clinical research internship was cancelled last summer, I took an online Brown molecular

biology class and completed Weill Cornell's virtual internship in cancer biology and precision medicine.

WashU is a perfect fit for allowing me to continue to pursue this passion. It's resources and focus on research and experiential learning would give me opportunities I couldn't find anywhere else. With an emphasis on Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, I'd love to take courses like the Pediatric Emergency Medicine Research Associates Program, which would integrate me into the clinical field as an undergraduate and provide a way to see firsthand the practical applications of science and medicine.