

3 Great MIT Essay Examples

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[Sophie Alina](#), an expert advisor on CollegeVine, provided commentary on this post. Advisors offer one-on-one guidance on everything from essays to test prep to financial aid. If you want help writing your essays or feedback on drafts, [book a consultation](#) with Sophie Alina or another skilled advisor.

MIT is a difficult school to be admitted into; a strong essay is key to a successful application. In this post, we will discuss a few essays that real students submitted to MIT, and outline the essays' strengths and areas of improvement. *(Names and identifying information have been changed, but all other details are preserved).*

[Read our MIT essay breakdown](#) to get a comprehensive overview of this year's supplemental prompts.

Please note: Looking at examples of real essays students have submitted to colleges can be very beneficial to get inspiration for your essays. You should never copy or plagiarize from these examples when writing your own essays. Colleges can tell when an essay isn't genuine and will not view students favorably if they plagiarized.

Example 1

Prompt #1: We know you lead a busy life, full of activities, many of which are required of you. Tell us about something you do simply for the pleasure of it.

After devouring Lewis Carrolls' masterpiece, my world shifted off its axis. I transformed into Alice, and my favorite place, the playground, became Wonderland. I would gallivant around, marveling at flowers and pestering my parents with

questions, murmuring, “Curiouser and curiouser.” If Alice’s “Drink Me” potion was made out of curiosity, I drank liters of it. Alice, along with fairytale retellings like the *Land of Stories* by Chris Colfer, kickstarted my lifelong love of reading.

Especially when I was younger, reading brought me solace when the surrounding world was filled with madness (and sadly, not like the fun kind in *Alice in Wonderland*). There are so many nonsensical things that happen in the world, from shootings at a movie theater not thirty minutes from my home, to hate crimes targeted towards elderly Asians. Reading can be a magical escape from these problems, an opportunity to clear one’s mind from chaos.

As I got older, reading remained an escape, but also became a way to see the world and people from a new perspective. I can step into so many different people’s shoes, from a cyborg mechanic (*Cinder*), to a blind girl in WWII’s France (Marie-Laure, *All the Light We Cannot See*). Sure, madness is often prevalent in these worlds too, but reading about how these characters deal with it helps me deal with our world’s madness, too.

Reading also transcends generational gaps, allowing me to connect to my younger siblings through periodic storytimes. Reading is timeless — something I’ll never tire of.

What This Essay Did Well

This essay is highly detailed and, while it plays off a common idea that reading is an escape, the writer brings in personal examples of why this is so, making the essay more their own. These personal examples often include strong language (e.g. “devoured,” “gallivant,” “pestering.”), which make the imagery more vivid, the writing more interesting. More advanced language can add more nuance to an essay— instead of “ate,” the writer chooses to say “devoured,” and you can almost see the writer reading the book so quickly, taking it in almost as quickly as they might polish off a tray of cookies.

The writer also discusses how reading can not only be a solace from events that seem nonsensical, but a way to understand the madness in these events. By giving two different examples of how this can be so, that seem so varied from each other (the cyborg mechanic and the girl in WWII's France), the writer creates more depth to this idea.

What Could be Improved

At the beginning, the writer should consider cutting the introduction paragraph by a line to leave more room for the two major points of the essay in the following paragraphs. Instead of a long sentence about a love of reading being kickstarted, the writer could create a short, powerful sentence to kick off the next two paragraphs. "I was in love with reading."

The detail at the end about how reading also transcends generational gaps seems like an add-on that doesn't connect to the past two ideas— instead, I would suggest that this author expand a little more on the prior two ideas and tie them together at the end. "In this timeless world of reading, I can keep drinking from the well of curiosity. In the pages of a book, I have a space to find out more about the world around me, process its events, and more deeply understand others."

Example 2

Prompt #3: At MIT, we bring people together to better the lives of others. MIT students work to improve their communities in different ways, from tackling the world's biggest challenges to being a good friend. Describe one way in which you have contributed to your community, whether in your family, the classroom, your neighborhood, etc. (200-250 words)

"Orange throw!"

As I extended my arm to signal properly, the smallest girl on the orange team picked up the ball to throw it back into play. In AYSO, U10 players often lift their back foot when throwing the ball, so I focused my attention there.

Don't lift it. Keep it down.

It shot straight up.

My instincts blew the whistle to stop the game. The rulebook is simple: the rule was broken, give it to the other team. But the way she tried, eager to play, eager to learn and try again—I couldn't punish that. So I made my way over to the sideline to try it myself.

“When we're throwing it in, we wanna keep our back foot down. Try again!” After demonstrating, I backpedaled a bit and watched her throw again.

Don't lift it. Keep it down... Ah, it stayed down.

“Nice throw!”

And just like that, we were off again. These short, educational encounters happen multiple times a game. And while they may not be prescribed, they provide so many learning opportunities. These kids, they're the future of soccer. If they learn the basics, they can achieve greatness.

Every time I step out onto the pitch, that's what I see: potential. Little Alex may not throw correctly now, but with work, she could become the next Alex Morgan. That's why, in every soccer game I referee, every new situation I'm thrust into, I strive to see what's more; I strive to see the potential.

What the Essay Did Well

There is so much imagery in this essay! It's easy to see the scene in your mind. Through details such as “smallest girl” and describing the team as the

“orange,” the reader can more easily picture the scene in their mind. Giving color, size, and other details such as these can make the imagery stronger and the picture clearer in the reader’s mind.

The writer narrates their thought process through their use of italics, bringing the reader into the mind of the writer. The space for each line of dialogue separates each thought, so that the reader can feel the full emphasis of each line. The mingling of cognitive narration and details about the setting keep the momentum of the essay.

Through this essay, we learn that this referee is supportive to the members of the youth soccer teams that they are refereeing; instead of seeing the role of referee as punitive (punishing), this writer sees it as a coaching experience. This idea of creating educational encounters as one’s contribution to the community is definitely a great idea to build upon for this essay prompt.

What Could Be Improved

The contribution to the community is clear because of the emphasis on the coaching aspect of refereeing. However, especially thinking about structure, the author spends about half the essay on a single situation. Limiting this story to a third of the essay could give the writer more space to provide examples of other ways that the author has coached others. The author could have also connected this coaching experience to a mentoring experience in a different context, such as mentoring students at the YMCA, to create more connections between other extracurriculars and give more weight to this author’s contributions to the community.

The second to last paragraph (“And just like that, we were off again...”) could benefit from another example or two about showing, not telling. The sentence “And while they might not be prescribed, they provide so many learning opportunities” is already clear from the situation that the author has given; the author has already called these “educational encounters” in the prior sentence. Instead of that sentence, the writer could have given another example about a child thanking the writer for a coaching tip, or the expression on a different player’s face when they learned a new skill.

Additionally, the role of the writer is not immediately clear at the beginning, although it’s suspected that this student is most likely the referee. The writer also provides details about “AYSO” (American Youth Soccer Organization)

and “U10,” where the writer could have referred to the games as “youth soccer games” to get the point across that the players are still learning basic skills about throwing the ball in. To make all of this clear, the writer could have said “As a referee for youth soccer games, I have seen that players often lift their back foot when throwing the ball, so I focused my attention there.” Acronyms are usually best to be avoided in essays- they can take the reader’s attention away from what is actually happening and lead them to wonder about what the letters in the acronym stand for.

Example 3

Prompt #5: Tell us about the most significant challenge you’ve faced or something important that didn’t go according to plan. How did you manage the situation?

“It’s... unique,” they say.

I sag, my younger sister’s koala drawing staring at me from the wall. It always seemed like her art ended up praised and framed, while mine ended up in the trash can when I wasn’t looking. In contrast to my sister, art always came as a bit of a struggle for me. My bowls were lopsided and my portraits looked like demons. Many times, I’ve wanted to scream and quit art once and for all. I craved my parents’ validation, a nod of approval or a frame on the wall.

Eventually, my art improved, and I made some of my favorite projects, from a ceramic haunted house to mushroom salt-and-pepper shakers. Even then, I didn’t get much praise from my parents, but I realized I genuinely loved art. It wasn’t something I enjoyed because of others’ praise; I just liked creating things of my own and the inexplicable thrill of chasing a challenge. Art has taught me to love failing miserably at something to continue it again the next day. If I never endured countless Bob Ross tutorials, I never would’ve made the mountain painting that I hang in my room today; if I never made pottery that blew up (just once!), I wouldn’t have my giant ceramic pie.

I'm still light years from being an expert, but I'll never tire of the kick of a challenge.

What This Essay Did Well

The detail about the sister's koala drawing being framed and praised while this writer's portraits look like "demons" and bowls "lopsided" draws a nice contrast between the skills of the sister versus those of the writer. In response to the prompt, the author justifies that this is a significant challenge by saying that they "wanted to scream and quit art once and for all" and that they still desired their parents' approval.

The writer's response to the situation— taking more tutorials online, creating many different pots before getting it right— is nicely framed. Many times, students forget to include examples that demonstrate how they respond to the situation, and this writer does a good job of including some of those details.

What Could be Improved

The writer seems to emphasize the parents' approval piece in the first paragraph, but then moves away from that point more to focus on the "thrill of chasing a challenge." This essay could be improved by focusing a little more on how the writer emotionally moved past not getting that approval "Even then, I didn't get much praise from my parents, but I finally realized I didn't need to focus on that. I could focus on my love of art, on the inexplicable thrill of chasing the challenge..."

The sentence of "Eventually, my art improved..." leaves the reader with the question— how? Saying "Eventually, after many YouTube tutorials and a few destroyed pots, my art improved" could give more details to that sentence without taking away from the sentence about the Bob Ross tutorials and the pot blowing up.

Where to Get Feedback on Your Essay

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