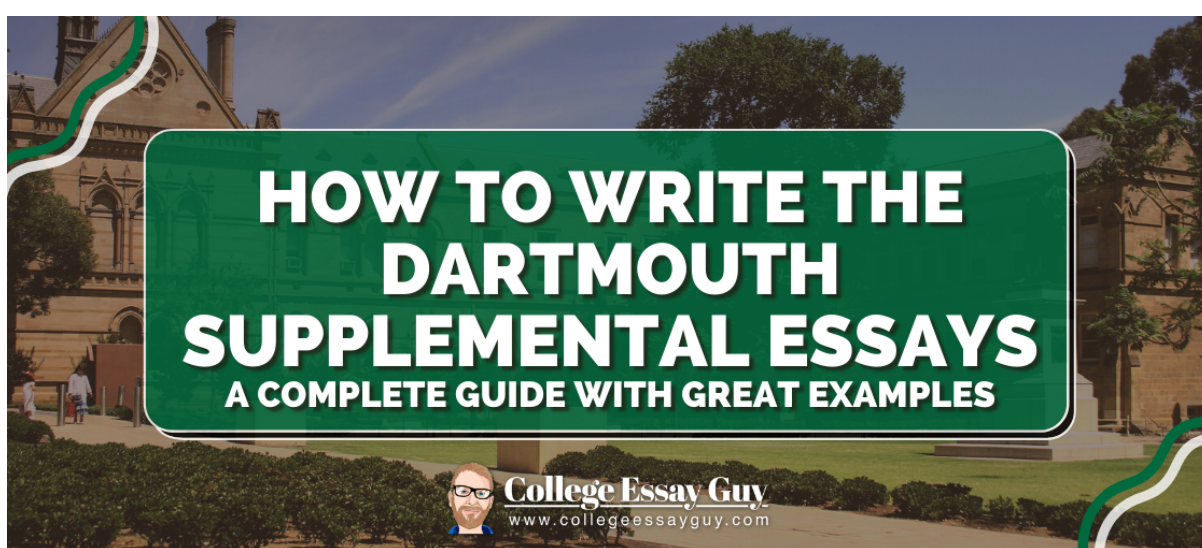


How to Write the Dartmouth Supplemental Essays: Examples + Guide 2022/2023



You'll find an extensive, by-the-numbers look at Dartmouth's offerings, from enrollment and tuition statistics to student life and financial aid information, on its [Common Data Set](#). For insight into how this private research university envisions its historic "Inclusive Excellence" initiative to foster diversity, check out the [Provost's Diversity Plan](#) (feel free to skim if you need to). Reading through this will give you a strong idea of what Dartmouth values, what its future looks like (and how and where you may fit in).

But please don't just copy and paste chunks of the plan into your essay because a) that's plagiarism and basically an academic crime, and b) anyone can do that.

More on what you should do *instead* below.

WHAT ARE THE DARTMOUTH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS?

PROMPT #1

Required of all applicants. Please respond in 100 words or fewer:

Dartmouth celebrates the ways in which its profound sense of place informs its profound sense of purpose. As you seek admission to Dartmouth's Class of 2027, what aspects of the College's academic program, community, or campus environment attract your interest? In short, Why Dartmouth? Please respond in 100 words or fewer.

PROMPT #2

Required of all applicants. Please respond in 200-250 words: "Be yourself," Oscar Wilde advised. "Everyone else is taken." Introduce yourself in 200-250 words.

PROMPT #3

Please choose one of the following prompts and respond in 200-250 words:

- *Labor leader and civil rights activist Dolores Huerta recommended a life of purpose. "We must use our lives to make the world a better place to live, not just to acquire things," she said. "That is what we are put on the earth for." In what ways do you hope to make—or are you making—an impact?*
- *What excites you?*
- *In The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind, William Kamkwamba, Class of 2014, reflects on constructing a windmill from recycled materials to power the electrical appliances in his family's Malawian house: "If you want to make it, all you have to do is try." What drives you to create and what do you hope to make or have you already made?*
- *Dr. Seuss, aka Theodor Geisel of Dartmouth's Class of 1925, wrote, "Think and wonder. Wonder and think." What do you wonder and think about?*
- *"Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced," wrote James Baldwin. How does this quote apply to your life experiences?*

HOW TO WRITE EACH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR DARTMOUTH

HOW TO WRITE THE DARTMOUTH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY #1

Dartmouth celebrates the ways in which its profound sense of place informs its profound sense of purpose. As you seek admission to Dartmouth's Class of 2027, what aspects of the College's academic program, community, or campus environment attract your interest? In short, Why Dartmouth? Please respond in 100 words or fewer.

This is a *super* short “Why us?” essay.

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

Here’s the “Why us?” essay guide—in this case the Cornell example is probably the best example to check out. We talk a bit about how to tackle the shorter version of this essay, and the Tufts example is a great one.

Here’s the short version:

Spend 1 hr+ researching 7+ reasons why Dartmouth might be a great fit for you (ideally these reasons will be unique to Dartmouth *and* connect back to you).

Maybe make a copy of [this chart](#) to help you map out your college research. Pick the top 3-4 reasons and consider drafting a one-sentence thesis to set your essay up.

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 Dartmouth’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.

Here’s a great sample essay for this prompt:

As someone who aspires to become an economist fighting climate change, I believe Dartmouth will be the best place to start. I look forward to model policy-making projects in Environmental Problem Analysis and Policy Formulation (ENV 50), but also applying these experiences to the Sustainability Task Force, where I hope to explore renewable solutions to contribute to Dartmouth's 50% renewable energy target by 2025. But when I'm not at the Irving Institute for Energy and Society or on an Energy Immersion Trip, I hope to dig into new dishes with Spoon members or write preposterous (yet meaningful) articles for Jack-O-Lantern.

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Tips + Analysis:

Be direct. With just 100 words, there's little room for verbal bubble wrap. Just the goods. If you know what you want to study/be/do, consider clearly naming your dream or aspiration in the first sentence. This writer tells us that she aspires to be a climate change-fighting economist (cool) *and* alludes to a future major or double major (bonus). If you don't know what you want to do/study/major in, don't worry, just focus on the tips below.

List specific classes. This shows that you've done your research (and for one of the most research-intensive universities in the United States, maybe even the world, this matters). Listing specific, pertinent classes is the first rite of passage to make it into the "Why us?" essay hall of fame. This student takes it a step further, showing us how she'll apply the knowledge she's gained from "Environmental Problem Analysis and Policy Formulation (ENV 50)" to the "Sustainability Task Force," where she'll contribute to a university-wide goal ("50% renewable energy target by 2025"). Gold stars for days.

Imagine yourself at Dartmouth: Rather than writing, "I hope to participate in the Irving Institute for Energy and Society," this student uses the present tense ("I'm") as if she is already at Dartmouth. Paint a picture of yourself on campus: What are you doing? How are you engaged with Dartmouth's community in and out of the classroom? Imagination is a powerful tool. Help the reader see you there.

Show a side of yourself that you haven't elsewhere in your application. We know you're smart and motivated by research and academics. But, what else? Remember that these super-short essays are the speed dating of college essays. In the last line, we learn that this student is not just a future climate change-fighting economist, but also a foodie *and* a writer who plans

to write “preposterous” and “meaningful” articles for the school magazine.
What’s not to love?

Here’s another great example:

Dartmouth’s abundance of trees reminds me of my local arboretum, a refuge which has nurtured my science enthusiasm and encouraged me to branch out into social sciences. In the Biology-Modified major, Disease, The Environment, and Human History will teach me about diet modifications and diseases that have intensified negative environmental changes. Advocating for H.Res.109 (Green New Deal) has expanded my interests in sociology and environmental science. Through Health Disparities, I would learn how race and social class affect health treatments, while expanding the practical knowledge I’ve gained at Community-Servings, a nonprofit that provides healthy food for impoverished families. (100)

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HOW TO WRITE THE DARTMOUTH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY #2

"Be yourself," Oscar Wilde advised. "Everyone else is taken." Introduce yourself in 200-250 words

Important note: This is a new prompt for 2022, so we don’t have essays written specifically for it yet, but the below example, written for a past Dartmouth prompt, would work well (though would need to be cut by 50 words).

Example:

•2002 Prasuti-Griha Hospital, Nepal. I’m born Shrinkhala Sunuwar. Eleven months later, my parents weep. Diversity Visa Lottery is a win and loss: my parents can’t bring me to America with them.

•2008 Kathmandu, NP. I greet people with नमस्कार (namaste). Dust permeates my nostrils as I walk by others bargaining in market stalls to grandpa’s palm reading sessions. Flickering temple lights, smells of incense, and lively monkeys open my eyes to my Nepalese ethnicity and religion.

•2009 Brighton-MA. I become American and reunite with my parents. I’m mystified by July-4th fireworks. Autumn turns green leaves red and yellow. Other firsts: riding trains, biking in parks, learning to swim at the YMCA, and my first loss: grandpa’s death to laryngeal cancer. These experiences strengthen my character and impulse to explore the unknown.

•2012 Walter-St, Roslindale-MA. I become a photographer. My escape: Arnold Arboretum. I birdwatch and sit atop Peter's Hill to marvel at the city view. I bike across winding trails that lead to secret destinations. Desire to capture nature leads to a love for photography.

•2015 Centre-St, Roslindale-MA. I'm reborn as Caroline Sunuwar. A paint palette and a palate for American dishes. First house. We spend hours painting walls red, white, and blue. I eat Harry's All-American Breakfast, A & N Pizza, and burritos. I gain appreciation for America's colors and flavors.

•2016 Boston, MA. I become a leader. BLCDC. Seven teenagers host drives, bake sales, petitions for nuclear disarmament through Mass Peace partnership. Social advocacy leads to a stronger self.

•2019 Everywhere. Hello has replaced नमस्कार. Instead of running around temples throwing bananas at monkeys, I pray peacefully at Sri Lakshmi temple. Rather than observing market vendors, I observe physicians, politicians, and researchers. The Diversity Visa Lottery that separated my parents and me has ultimately yielded more wins than losses.

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Quick Tips + Analysis:

Due to the word limit for this one, if you want to include a challenge, keep it short and impactful. The writer clues us into incredible challenges (being separated from her parents for seven years and her grandfather dying while she's away in America), but she doesn't linger for too long on these. The essay could have been about seven years without her parents and how that shaped her (and in some ways, it is), but she keeps going. She shows her values of independence and adaptability. She also explores complexity. Instead of "My parents left me behind when they went to America," for example, she writes, "Diversity Visa Lottery is a win and loss: my parents can't bring me to America with them." This demonstrates that she recognizes the opportunity this change brought for her parents even though it was likely difficult for the whole family.

If possible, avoid common phrases. How? First, write a draft describing your story exactly as it happened. Focus on getting all the details on the page (the more, the better). Then, think about what's essential to the story, and then try to describe the big challenges and transitions in an unexpected way. Challenge yourself to find unique words and phrases that are specific to your life. Some examples from this essay:

Instead of:

"I grew up speaking Hindi"

The author writes:

"I greet people with नमस्कार (namaste)."

Instead of:

"Then, I came to America and learned English."

The author writes:

"Hello has replaced नमस्कार."

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HOW TO WRITE THE DARTMOUTH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY #3

Please choose one of the following prompts and respond in 200-250 words:

1. Labor leader and civil rights activist Dolores Huerta recommended a life of purpose. "We must use our lives to make the world a better place to live, not just to acquire things," she said. "That is what we are put on the earth for." In what ways do you hope to make—or are you making—an impact?
2. What excites you?
3. In *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, William Kamkwamba, Class of 2014, reflects on constructing a windmill from recycled materials to power the electrical appliances in his family's Malawian house: "If you want to make it, all you have to do is try." What drives you to create and what do you hope to make or have you already made?
4. Dr. Seuss, aka Theodor Geisel of Dartmouth's Class of 1925, wrote, "Think and wonder. Wonder and think." What do you wonder and think about?
5. "Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced," wrote James Baldwin. How does this quote apply to your life experiences?

If you love thinking about Big Ideas, like why books are dangerous, how to nurture creativity, and ways we cultivate beauty, you might find writing the Dartmouth essays actually fun! The hard part? Choosing a prompt.

Quick tip: You can probably recycle this essay for another school's supplemental essay, or vice versa (tweak something you're writing for another school for this prompt). If you already have a list of your essay prompts for the other schools you're applying to, consider writing a **Super Essay** and use it for both.

Here are some quick tips for each prompt:

Prompt #1: *In what ways do you hope to make—or are you making—an impact?* This can be a future-focused essay in that it doesn't really rely on

Something Important You've Done. But it also tends to be easier to write effectively about concrete actions you've already taken. If you're worried that you haven't done a ton of stuff worth writing about, this might be a good one to consider.

Prompt #2: *What excites you?* This prompt is an open request for you to talk about your interests, but remember to bring it back to yourself and your values. To brainstorm ideas, take 2 minutes to play the “I Love” Game. That should give you a menu of ideas. Pro Tip: this could also be a great chance to write a mini “Why Major?” essay.

Prompt #3: *What drives you to create?* This is a great prompt for not only creatives, but also scientists, and even business students. Think about it: You can *create* lasting friendships, a way of looking at life, or the best way to cook scrambled eggs. Spend a half hour thinking about all the things in your life that you make. It's probably a lot. Then ask yourself: *Why* do I create?

Prompt #4: *What do you wonder and think about?* Curious about internet slang? Wondering where Suzan-Lori Parks drew her inspiration for *Topdog/Underdog*? Here's your chance to write about it. Check out the example below for more tips on this prompt.

Prompt #5: “*Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.*” What in your life has changed, or evolved? Or what changes have you witnessed in your community? Have you been comfortable with these changes, or not so much? How have you adapted, grown, developed? This is another one that's worth spending 30 minutes just thinking about. Maybe go for a walk, put on some music, and let your mind wander as you consider what change has meant in your life. Or, for that matter, curiosity, creation, or any of the rest of these prompts.

Here's a great example essay:

Essay Example for Prompt #1:

Labor leader and civil rights activist Dolores Huerta recommended a life of purpose. "We must use our lives to make the world a better place to live, not just to acquire things," she said. "That is what we are put on the earth for." In what ways do you hope to make—or are you making—an impact?

While I lived in Mexico, my dad's security system could not protect our restaurant from robbers, who would steal anything from cash to the shrimp from our freezer. After the sixth robbery that year, I began experimenting with our security system. It turned out the devices were utterly unusable: the cameras would disconnect, the sensors would malfunction overnight, and the alarms wouldn't contact the police. I wondered how we could improve that system.

That's when my interest in engineering was born.

I want to design a multitasking, roof-crawling, autonomous device capable of sensing, recording, and reporting potential criminal activity. But to develop the necessary skills and knowledge, I'll need Dartmouth's help.

At Dartmouth, I look forward to a modified major in the Thayer School of Engineering that teaches both Psychology and Engineering/Computer Sciences.

Thieves are often able to outthink security systems because they research their target prior to attack, so exploring cognition through courses like "Psychology and Organizations" will help me create a system ready for the most creative minds.

In addition, I am interested in Professor Charles Sullivan's research on "Microfabricated magnetic components using nanomaterials," and Professor Eric Fossum's research on "Advanced image sensors and camera systems." Miniaturizing the components of a robot and utilizing next-generation camera technology together can revolutionize the ways that security devices monitor and record.

Finally, having been raised in three distinct cultural worlds, I seek to promote diversity wherever I go, and I'm looking forward to sharing part of my Mexican heritage with other Latinx students by joining La Alianza Latina.

Coming from a family that has been committed to intensive manual labor, I pioneer the era of modern technology. With a Dartmouth education, I contemplate the possibility of upgrading the security of our small restaurant and perhaps, one day, national security.

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Tips + Analysis

Consider using this simple, three-part structure: the challenge, what you've done (or hope to do) about it, and how Dartmouth can help. Even though this prompt asks you to discuss how you will make or are making an impact, admission readers really want to know about you and how you'll use your education. State the problem succinctly, say why it matters to you personally (if you can), then spend the rest of the essay showing how you've tackled it (or will tackle it) and what specific resources you'll make use of.

Consider hooking the reader (briefly) before revealing your specific topic.

This student starts off with "robbers, who would steal anything from cash to the shrimp from our freezer," creating a compelling story line and urging the reader to continue reading to learn more. This is much more interesting than if he'd started with the thesis, "I want to create advanced image sensors and camera systems to prevent robberies at my dad's restaurant."

Approach the second half like a "Why us?" essay. Get super duper specific with what opportunities you'll make use of at Dartmouth. Imagine yourself at Dartmouth and paint that picture for the admission reader. Include professors

you're interested in working with and classes you're dying to take. By letting us know that Dartmouth has a modified major in the Thayer School of Engineering that teaches both Psychology and Engineering/Computer Sciences and classes like Psychology and Organizations to help him get into the heads of thieves, it's clear that this student has really done his research. For more on how to do this, [click here](#) for the complete guide.

Here's one more great example:

Essay Example for Prompt #4:

Dr. Seuss, aka Theodor Geisel of Dartmouth's Class of 1925, wrote, "Think and wonder. Wonder and think." What do you wonder and think about?

"I don't get it."

I glance over at my sister. We are at the Metropolitan Museum of Art looking at Composition, my favorite piece by Piet Mondrian. Tracing the dark lines, we watch as they meet at vertices to form rectangles. "It's math," I reply. "No pun intended, but that's the point."

If we had not been in a crowded museum, I would have told her that one of the first things we are taught in algebra is how to graph a line on a coordinate plane. That $Y=MX+B$ governs us until we learn $Y=ax^2+bx+c$. I would have explained how we are reminded, time and time again, of the importance of graphical analysis; like the paintings of Mondrian, though not as gracefully, our lines come together to form shapes. Geometry then teaches us of right angles, the foundation of both structure and society. Calculus asks us to retrieve data from the lines we had graphed when we first learned. Forming an Eulerian cycle, our mathematical world follows a path, hitting off each edge and meeting back at the same vertex.

I was not a math person until I stumbled upon the works of Matt Parker and Noson S. Yanofsky. Staying up late into the night, flashlight in hand, sister reminding me to get some sleep, I was introduced to a world of numbers beyond what I'd been taught in school. I began to see mathematical concepts for their beauty, recognizing their influence in art and philosophy, even pushing myself to try Coursera courses in coding after Parker's references to logic gates. Besides being the bane of schoolchildren everywhere (and perhaps my family at the dinner table), graph theory underlies the methods with which we perceive our universe—both literally and figuratively, the possibilities are limitless.

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Tips + Analysis

Consider using “geeky” language. This writer shows us that she knows her math *and* catches the reader’s tired eyes with: “That $Y=MX+B$ governs us until we learn $Y=ax^2+bx+c$.” Don’t be shy about doing the same. But do it within reason, because overdoing it may alienate your reader.

Tell us what you’ve done outside class. Push yourself to go beyond what’s offered at school and show that off (humbly) in your essay. For many, high school sucked. This student tells us about her late-night internet discoveries (Matt Parker, a literal “Standup Mathematician,” and Noson S. Yanofsky, a college-level math prof who writes college-level stuff for the advanced and curious HS students). But then she goes further, taking “Coursera courses in coding after Parker’s references to logic gates.” What do you learn about outside of school? Surprise us. Haven’t explored much outside class? There’s still time! (Probably.)

Try to make uncommon connections. Art + math = uncommon connection. We don’t expect a moment at the MET to turn into an ode to math. But it does, and that’s what makes this essay great. How do you do this? Take a look at [this values list](#) and ask yourself: *What’s something the reader would not expect me to say?*