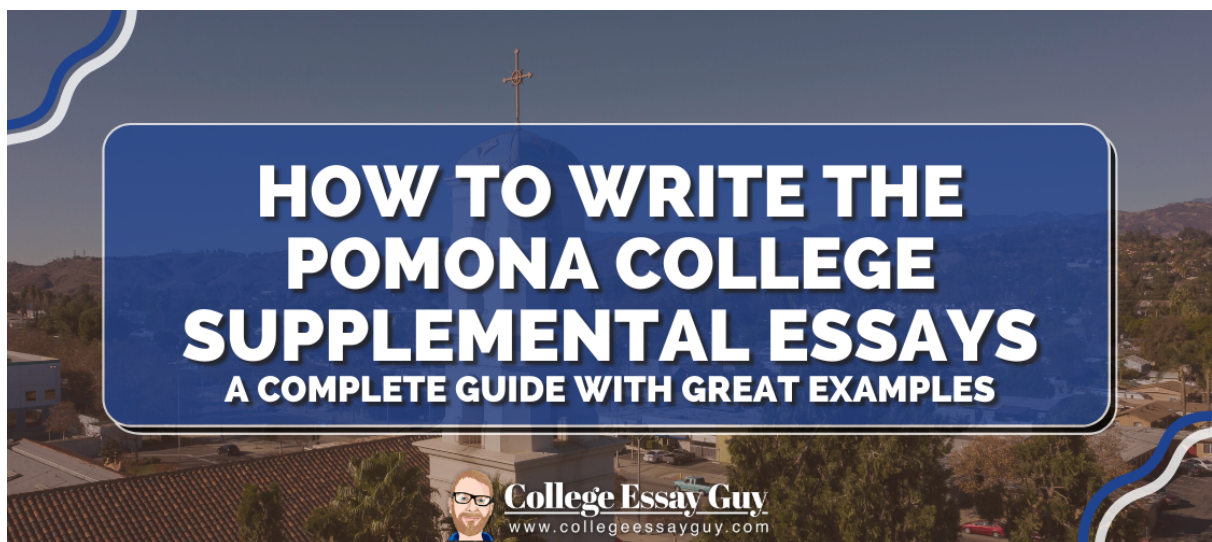


How to Write the Pomona College Supplemental Essays: Examples + Guide 2022/2023



Pomona is filled with curious, creative, leadership-oriented, and diverse students. You might be thinking, “That sounds like a lot of things I need to tackle in one application ...” While you’re not wrong, Pomona’s supplemental essay prompts actually outline these areas for you. And we’re here to help, of course.

Before we dive into the prompts, check out Pomona’s website to get a better sense of what it’s 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 insights into its values, read [its mission statement](#) and [Strategic Vision](#) to learn more about how the school envisions its role and how it wants to grow and evolve.

WHAT ARE THE POMONA COLLEGE SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS?

The Pomona-specific essay prompts for those applying for Fall 2023 admission include an academic interest statement (max. 150 words); a short-response essay (max. 150 words); and a longer-response essay (max. 250 words).

1) ACADEMIC INTEREST STATEMENT

What do you love about the subject(s) you selected as potential major(s)? If undecided, share more about one of your academic passions.

2) SHORT-RESPONSE ESSAY

(Optional) Short Answers: Choose to respond to one of the following three prompts in 150 words or less:

- *At Pomona, we celebrate and identify with the number 47. Share with us one of your quirky personal, family, or community traditions and why you hold on to it.*
- *What item are you excited to bring with you to college?*
- *Describe a time when you felt empowered or on top of the world?*

3) LONGER-RESPONSE ESSAY

Choose to respond to one of the following three prompts in 250 words or less:

- *In the past few years, is there something you have changed your mind about? Why?*
- *Reflecting on a community that you are part of, what values or perspectives from that community would you bring to Pomona?*
- *What strength or quality do you have that most people might not see or recognize?*

HOW TO WRITE EACH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR POMONA COLLEGE

HOW TO WRITE POMONA SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

Academic Interest Statement: What do you love about the subject(s) you selected as potential major(s)? If undecided, share more about one of your academic passions.

This first prompt is a change for the 2022-23 application season. This is a “Why Major” essay, asking you to describe your proposed area of study at Pomona and why it’s your thing. For this prompt, you’ll want to do more than simply answer the question, “What do you want to study?” Instead, help us understand what piques your intellectual curiosity. That goes double for if you’re undecided—show Pomona how and why you explore.

This Academic Interest Statement is also a chance to demonstrate that you understand Pomona’s liberal arts identity. [This page](#) outlines Pomona’s educational philosophy and references critical thinking, outside-the-classroom conversations and collaborations, in-depth projects (think research and internships), and **“intellectual curiosity that reaches across disciplines ... as varied as dance and computer science.”** Use these clues as a guide to help you up-level your “Why Major” response. Are there moments of collaboration—or conversations outside of the formal class setting—that helped you fall in love with your subject(s) of interest even more? Have you seen moments of connection between your proposed major(s) and others that are different or seemingly unrelated? Showing that you value interdisciplinary education is a great way to demonstrate Pomona fit.

Here’s an example that was written in response to an older version of the prompt, but would work for this version by simply cutting 4 words.

Example 1:

As I cut into the intestinal tract of a pig, the odor of the formaldehyde seemed to dissipate when I stared in awe at the usually invisible world of vertebrate anatomy. My passion further developed through studying plant life and human pollution. In Tanzania, on a community service trip, I planted acacia trees and surveyed the health of a forest. Unfortunately, I also learned there that double bonds allow greenhouse gases to retain more heat and create obstacles to reversing their destruction. Technological advancements and the enormous cost of CO2 reversal requires global government commitment and economic planning. My Summer Program in Economics at Oxford clarified the complexity of fiscal policy decisions between satisfying immediate human demands and preserving our ecosystem's long-term health. At Pomona I will focus on the intersection of science and economics to determine how to allocate finite resources to meet current needs and use technology to address public health issues. (154 words)

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Tips + Analysis

Be specific. This student's response describes particular experiences that contributed to his interest in the intersection of science and economics. Can you recall a specific moment during a class that made you want to learn more about a topic or idea? Maybe you had a conversation with a mentor who inspired you intellectually? Or perhaps you experimented with something in your bedroom one day that pushed you to explore a new idea further. Whatever it was that inspired you, share it with as much color and detail as you can muster. Like this: "As I cut into the intestinal tract of a pig, the odor of the formaldehyde seemed to dissipate when I stared in awe at the usually invisible world of vertebrate anatomy."

Show how you've pursued your topic further through research or discussion. One way to do so is to include two components: a) a *specific instance* you felt inspired to learn more (formaldehyde), and b) *how* you further pursued that interest, idea, or topic (studying plant life and human pollution). After describing the experience you've had, don't forget to show what you did about it.

Illustrate passion (but you can skip the word "passion"). Admission officers want to see clear, compelling evidence of your intellectual curiosity. They're interested in hearing about what you want to study at Pomona and why, so focus on recalling those mini-movie moments that made you want to learn more about this deep interest of yours. (But the word "passion" can get pretty cliché pretty quickly, so we're fine if you skip it.)

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Example 2

Every seven minutes an endangered African elephant dies--killed by a bounty hunter for their valuable ivory tusks. Every five minutes approximately 565 babies are born into poverty with limited chances for a better future. Every minute something happens somewhere that can be prevented through decisive action and good leadership. It's not these issues but the lack of action that has drawn me to international relations and media studies. With a double major that combines politics, economics, anthropology, and linguistics, I can explore the intricate workings of past and current governments with a broader, more global perspective. By diving into modern media work, I can develop the many individual causes and stories of people, places, and events through documentary work and graphic design. Pomona will provide me with an interdisciplinary education and help me develop my passions so that in those few minutes, a true difference is made.

Tips + Analysis:

Bring the heat. This author is clearly fired up about the injustices of our world, citing several alarming statistics that she'd like to address with her documentary and design career goals. This fire really up-levels her response and helps Pomona see that she's prepared to break past the status quo and spark change. There's a sense of urgency that she captures by using the "every minute" structure, further drilling home that she doesn't intend on being a passive participant in Pomona's active and engaged academic community. Ask yourself: what issues and challenges do I hope to address with my subject(s) of interest? This will help the admissions officer see that you're ready to blaze a trail on Pomona's campus and beyond.

Connect four (... or more). While this author has two primary academic interests (international relations and media studies), she does a great job of showing how those interests do not exist in a vacuum. She makes a great case for her connective abilities, demonstrating how she is eager to collaborate with scholars and creators in various disciplines (politics, economics, anthropology, linguistics). Showing that you are academically open and willing to join forces with those in other disciplines is a great way to show you're a fit for a liberal arts college.

HOW TO WRITE POMONA SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #2

Short-Response Essay: choose to respond to one of the following three prompts in 150 words or less:

At Pomona, we celebrate and identify with the number 47. Share with us one of your quirky personal, family, or community traditions and why you hold on to it.

What item are you excited to bring with you to college?

Describe a time when you felt empowered or on top of the world?

A previous Pomona short-answer prompt asked students to share their favorite way to eat a potato. Similarly, Pomona is offering you this space to share your creative, authentic self. Think of this prompt as a palate cleanser from some of the more "meaty" prompts (the Academic Interest Statement and the Longer-Response Essay), which are meant to elicit your intellectual maturity and college preparedness. Here, you can let your hair down, shake it out, and show a more complete you. Sure, you have profound personal and academic goals you want to achieve at Pomona, but you're also a fun human. Lean into the fun here!

Here's an example of the first option (“share with us one of your quirky personal, family, or community traditions and why you hold on to it”):

My great-grandpa's eyes twinkle as my 5-year-old self struggles to stir the giant pot of cioppino. Like this traditional seafood dish, I too am an Italian-American originating from California.

My very loud family crowds my house each holiday, relegating me to an air mattress, a sacrifice I'm more than willing to make. The rooms fill with stories and laughter as we down pizzelles and compete in a cutthroat cookie-decorating contest.

Likewise, my California beginnings, though brief, had a sizable impact on my life. I was a year old when we left, but California's adventurous culture is part of my identity, reinforced by annual trips to visit relatives. From hiking San Jacinto Peak, to days at Disneyland, where my grandparents and mom worked, each excursion left me giddily exhausted.

The true centerpiece of our get-togethers isn't the cioppino, but the experiences that connect us as family, and the adventures we experience

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Tips + Analysis

Win ‘em over with whimsy. In [this short YouTube video](#), several Pomona community members describe “the legend of 47.” Pomona people claim that 47 appears more commonly in everyday life than any other number, and share a few fun 47 references from Hollywood and pop culture. Similarly, this prompt gives students permission to be “quirky” and share lighthearted references from their world. This author anchors their response in heartwarming and sincere traditions that are a part of their Italian-American family, but stirs some colorful particulars—the loudness, the air mattress, the cutthroat cookie-decorating contest—into their giant pot of cioppino. Lots of families share meals and memories during get-togethers, but the particular “isms” of their family are what help individualize this response.

Don't forget the “why.” 150 words is not a lot of space to do archival research on your tradition-of-choice. While it can be tempting to describe the origin story or background of your tradition, Pomona is more interested in hearing *why* it continues to be something you partake in. This student briefly mentions cioppino's California roots, but spends more time illustrating how it helps them relive and remember their adventurous spirit. Your tradition may

have fascinating roots, but the core values that this tradition helps you live out are equally fascinating and worth sharing.

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And here are a few more samples:

What started out as a way to meet new people when we moved to Weston turned into an annual event: Every November, individuals of the Indian sub-continent collect at our house to celebrate Diwali—fireworks, traditional clothing, a potluck meal, tons of candles. We also have the little temple cabinet in our kitchen, celebrate the traditional holidays, and eat Indian food.

But culture to us is more than being grounded in our Indian roots.

Instead of sending me to the Hindu temple camps many of my friends attended, my parents wanted me to see the world. I've shared a meal with the people of Uros, living on man-made floating islands in Lake Titicaca, sung songs and danced with the Masai warriors of Kenya, and bartered in the Turkish and Moroccan bazaars.

Yes, I'm Indian and a first-generation American, but I'm also a global citizen. That's my culture.

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4 eggs. 2 cups milk. 1 cup flour. 1 tablespoon sugar. 1 teaspoon salt.

Swedish Pancakes have connected my family for generations. Learning the recipe with my aunt during Christmas brought us together and unlocked the secrets of the most delicious food on earth. Serving them to my Farmor and playing "Let it Be" on the piano was my way to say goodbye before she passed.

While their taste is divine, it's what Swedish Pancakes represent that really matters to me. They've been a portal to understanding my heritage and connecting to the people in my life who matter most.

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HOW TO WRITE POMONA SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #3

Even though only one of the options here explicitly mentions "community", you can think of each option below as helping admissions officers get a sense of how you fit with Pomona.

Longer Response Essay: choose to respond to one of the following three prompts in 250 words or less:

In the past few years, is there something you have changed your mind about? Why? Reflecting on a community that you are part of, what values or perspectives from that community would you bring to Pomona?

What strength or quality do you have that most people might not see or recognize?

Here's a way to think about the first option: one important aspect of college is encountering ideas and viewpoints that may challenge you, perhaps even make you uncomfortable. This is a chance to show Pomona how you engage with complex, challenging ideas, and how you've been open to change (and what that change has led to).

The second option is a pretty standard "community" prompt (and since you likely have other schools that ask similar questions, this may be a nice opportunity to reuse an essay—more on that just below).

For the third option, spend some time brainstorming possible skills or superpowers. Here are some questions to get your brain rolling:

What's your actual superpower?

What's your favorite story to tell?

What traditions have been passed down in your family?

What's perfect about your life?

When is a time you forgave someone or were forgiven for something?

How do you make people laugh?

What's your biggest secret?

What would you tell your younger self?

If the zombie apocalypse came tomorrow, what particular skill would you use to survive?

Because the community essay is such a common college prompt that you're likely writing a similar essay for another school, this could be a great opportunity to save yourself some time by writing a "super" essay. Read about that time- and stress-saver [here](#).

So the first thing you'll want to do is read up on what the community essay is. [Here's a step-by-step guide](#) that offers a short exercise to help you think through which communities you are a part of that might make a good topic for this essay (and while you're at it, the other two below).

Here's the short version on how to approach this essay:

Step 1: Create a “communities” chart by listing as many of your communities as you can think of. Keep in mind that communities can be defined in a variety of ways, including place, culture, interests, political beliefs, hobbies, and even your favorite sports team. Get creative.

Step 2: Use the **BEABIES exercise** to generate your essay content for 2-3 of these communities. For this essay, simply ask yourself and jot down notes to these questions:

What kinds of problems did you solve or work to solve (personally, locally, or globally) in that community? Make sure the problem is rooted in disagreement or conflict of perspectives, to address the heart of Pomona’s prompt.

What specific impact did you have?

What did you learn (skills, qualities, values)?

How did you apply the lessons you learned both within and outside that community?

Step 3: Pick a structure (narrative or montage—see that full step-by-step guide linked above for a breakdown and examples of these structural approaches) for writing this essay and focus on the community that you feel is most compelling and reveals the most about you, and connect those experiences to how you’ll impact the Pomona community.

So how do you bring this all to life? Check out this example, and we’ll break down why it works. And note that this essay was actually written for a different school and prompt—but that just illustrates how nicely you can double these up sometimes.

Example 1:

Here’s a secret: I didn’t always enjoy living in Mexico. Sometimes I was ostracized for looking Chinese, my family faced impunity, insecurity, and negligence, and many of the injustices were never resolved. But it’s true that it’s hard to appreciate what you have until it’s gone.

After arriving in the US, I noticed that Latinos faced inferiority and prejudice and, for a short while, I considered returning to Mexico. But the Latino community had given me a unique identity and voice that I took pride in and I wanted to give back, so instead of complaining about what I couldn’t do (as I had against the injustices in Mexico), I saw the potential to effect change here in the U.S.

I began to devote my time to break the negative connotations set on Latinos through the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project where I debated real

assembly bills amongst 124 Chicano/Latino students. I also chose to lead the Association of Latin American Students at my school, helping those like me seek higher education. But what truly warms my heart is seeing young Sophomore Latinos striving in the STEM field during our math tutoring sessions.

My goal is to uphold the diversity and voice of Latinos in the U.S., and someday initiate a cultural/educational revolution that Mexico desperately needs. I don't feel ostracized anymore. Instead I have come to love and advocate for this community.
(237 words)

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Tips + Analysis

Name your community clearly, and add some nuance. It's clear from this student's first sentence that he'll be writing about his belonging in the Latino community. But he doesn't stop there. Through the first two paragraphs, he layers on some other identities ("looking Chinese" in Mexico, Latino community in America) that highlight his unique perspective. Adding nuance to your community can help you stand out *and* help set you up to share specific insights you've gained.

Identify the conflict you worked to resolve in your community, and name specific actions that led toward that resolution. Control your own message by naming the specific conflict you're writing about (as this student did: "in the US, I noticed that Latinos faced inferiority and prejudice"), and share specific things you've done to help resolve that conflict (ex.: debating bills with the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project, leading the Association of Latin American Students). Use the actions you took to demonstrate your values and your community engagement.

Zoom out and look to the future. Even if they don't say it outright, Pomona officials want to know how you'll use your conflict-resolution skills while you're on their campus, and beyond. This student takes the long view, sharing his goal to "uphold the diversity and voice of Latinos in the U.S., and someday initiate a cultural/educational revolution that Mexico desperately needs." One thing that could take this to the next level? Adding just a dose of "Why us?" content. This student could have included one or two resources or organizations on campus that would help him start on his path toward his long-term goal.

Or here's an essay originally written for UNC Chapel Hill that could work, with some tweaks that we'll explain in the Tips + Analysis section below.

Example 2:

You wouldn't think an American Asian Affinity Space would be diverse, after all its whole premise is centered around one specific identity. However, members of the affinity space at my high school come from several different grades, genders and ethnicities. The group included a sophomore from China, a junior from Pakistan, and members from Korea, Japan, and even Israel. We each had unique stories of living as an Asian-American, yet, we had all chosen to come to this affinity group. As we spent time together, we were able to find shared experiences, like our parents preparing packed lunches for us from our country and being too embarrassed to bring them to school. Whether eating humbow or biryani, we all knew what it was like to feel out of place.

My work with the AAAS got me thinking about what diversity can look like, and what it means to embrace diversity. On the one hand, you can find diversity even when people appear to be alike. By exploring our differences, we can continue learning from each other even when it seems we have shared backgrounds and values. At the same time, people who seem really different may have shared human experiences, feeling like the "other" or being embarrassed by their parents, that can bring them together. Moving forward, I want to learn about people's differences, hearing their stories and learning about their backgrounds while also creating spaces for people to have shared experiences that bring people together.
(246 words)

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Tips + Analysis

Be specific when describing your experiences. This student does that well, relating how the value of diversity ("different grades, genders and ethnicities") impacted her American Asian Affinity Space club, using details like "eating humbow or biryani" to describe shared experiences. As you go to write, try to engage your 5 senses in the color and examples you use.

Be you. In other words, pull from your own experience. There's no right or wrong answer to this prompt (or, really, any prompts, for that matter). The admission team merely wants to understand your relationship with community. You could have grown up in a homogenous community and still have important insight to share. You could talk about how you hope to be in a more diverse environment in college, for instance, to have the opportunity to learn about different cultures and perspectives. You don't have to have a

crazy story of your experience as a marginalized group or of living in a robustly diverse city to write an impactful essay.

Show how you'll engage. If the above UNC example were to be doubled up for this Pomona prompt, it could be tweaked to more directly address the “what values or perspectives from that community would you bring to Pomona?” aspect of the question, possibly by focusing on how the student wants to continue engaging with related parts of the Pomona community.