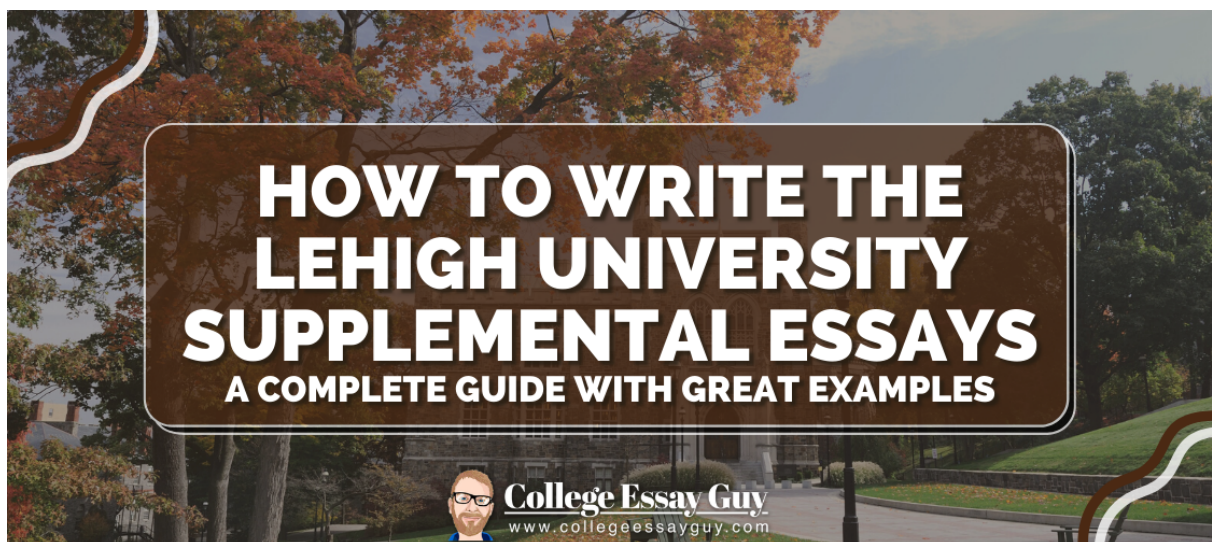


How to Write the Lehigh University Supplemental Essays: Examples + Guide 2022/2023



Lehigh's supplemental essays are pretty short, so it's kinda' useful to think of them as Polaroid pictures. They're simple snapshots that speak to memories and moments that meant enough for you to want to capture them.

And remember, just like Polaroid pictures, the Lehigh supplementals can take a little time to develop. Waiting can be frustrating, but when the photo fully emerges, it's a reminder of where you've been and what you value.

Want to get a better sense of what Lehigh 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 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 Lehigh's values.

WHAT ARE THE LEHIGH UNIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS?

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

For applicants to the 5-year dual degree Arts-Engineering program: With the understanding that you are able to change Colleges at Lehigh after one year, why did you select the 5-year dual degree Arts-Engineering program, which requires a major in both the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering? (150 words)

OR

For applicants to the Computer Science & Business program: What makes the Computer Science and Business (CSB) program the best fit for your academic and/or professional goals? (150 words)

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #2

How did you first learn about Lehigh University and what motivated you to apply? (150 words)

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #3

A compelling characteristic of Lehigh's community is that our students want to be actively engaged in their learning, their community, and the world. Our students look to make a difference and have a real-world impact. We expect our community to challenge your viewpoint, your naturalized assumptions, and the way that you see the world around you. Lehigh University is committed to being an anti-racist institution. By this, we mean actively speaking out and addressing acts of racism, racist comments, racist practices, policies, and procedures.

What would you want to be different in your own country or community to respond to issues of inequality, inequity, or injustice? (100-300 words)

HOW TO WRITE EACH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

HOW TO WRITE LEHIGH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

For applicants to the 5-year dual degree Arts-Engineering program:

With the understanding that you are able to change Colleges at Lehigh after one year, why did you select the 5-year dual degree Arts-Engineering program, which requires a major in both the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering? (150 words)

OR

For applicants to the Computer Science & Business program:

What makes the Computer Science and Business (CSB) program the best fit for your academic and/or professional goals? (150 words)

Arts-Engineering and CSB applicants, this one's for you! (Not applying to either program? Head down to the "Why Major" essay in Prompt 2.)

Think of both of these as "Why us?" prompts, but strictly for the program you've chosen, not Lehigh as a whole (save that for Prompt 3). A lot of the same principles will apply here, so we've taken the "Why us?" prompt advice and tweaked it for these, and the shorter word budgets:

Spend 1 hr+ researching 5-7 reasons why either the Arts-Engineering or CSB program might be a great fit for you (ideally 3-4 of the reasons will be unique to that program *and* connect back to you).

Make a copy of [this chart](#) to map out your 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!

We don't have an example essay for this prompt yet, but if you're applying to either program, check out the "Why us?" and "Why Major?" guides linked above for guidance, examples, and analysis .

HOW TO WRITE LEHIGH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #2

How did you first learn about Lehigh University and what motivated you to apply? (150 words)

This is a short “Why us?” essay.

Because it’s so short, the key here is to find 2-3 things that set Lehigh 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 to check out. We talk a bit about how to tackle the shorter version of the “Why us?,” and the Tufts essay is a great example of that.

Here’s the short version of the guide:

Spend 1 hr+ researching 10+ reasons why [University] might be a great fit for you (ideally 3-5 of the reasons will be unique to [University] *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:

Mistake #1: Writing about the school'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.

A word about the essay below: We know what this student did sounds super-impressive, but you don’t have to start a non-profit or produce your own eyewear to stand out in this essay. In fact, we believe this makes a great example not for the details he writes about but *how* he writes about them. Check out the Tips + Analysis section to see what we mean.

Example:

I intend to major in mechanical engineering with a minor in entrepreneurship. I’m in the early stages of designing a portable optical machine to produce durable eyeglass frames through my non-profit. The resources and opportunities at Lehigh--from the Baker

Institute to the Hatchery, LehighSiliconValley program, Interdisciplinary Research Institutes, and faculty mentorship--will help me make my optical device a reality.

At Lehigh's full-day VIEW program, I learned about the TE Capstone program that follows the IPD process created at Lehigh. This program offers the opportunity to work with an interdisciplinary team on real-world, industry-sponsored projects, such as medical devices or electric motor brakes, and allows students to put theory into practice.

In addition to academics, Lehigh offers many clubs that interest me, including Formula SAE and ASME. Fitness and competitive sports will always play a central role in my life, so I plan to join club soccer and golf. (148 words)

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Tips + Analysis

Be as specific as possible in your intro. Notice how this student isn't just direct by getting right to the meat of the essay; they're specific. They zoom in on a unique, interdisciplinary combination—a mechanical engineering major *and* a minor in entrepreneurship—then detail just how those offerings would help them design the device they're working on. Your interests may not be so granular—in fact, you may still be undecided as to your major or career path. That's okay too. The key is leading with that one special thing that Lehigh offers that you can't find most anywhere else. Being direct and specific, as exemplified here, can have the added benefit of expressing a clear-eyed understanding of why you and Lehigh are a perfect match. Speaking of specifics ...

Use as many Lehigh specifics as you can. Because of the tight word budget, we recommend above that you research 2-3 examples of Lehigh opportunities that interest you, but this essay is a great example of how you can fit in even more details and not make it sound like a droll recitation of the course directory. In fact, we count 11 aspects of Lehigh's academics and campus life that this student is excited about. You don't have to have that many, of course—the key is to find those you're truly jazzed about, and connect at least a couple of them back to things you've done or plan to do.

Don't forget about the first part of the prompt. The prompt doesn't just ask, "Why us?" It also wants to know how you "first learned about Lehigh." This student attended its "full-day VIEW program," which is great, but don't think you have to have had a similar intensive experience on its campus. That's not too realistic in the COVID era anyway. Maybe you have a friend who goes there and raves about the place, or maybe Lehigh came up in your research on "best colleges in X major." Whatever your answer is, use this as another chance to explain why you're excited about being a Mountain Hawk.

Try to show variety in your interests. College is about more than academics, and Lehigh has some robust out-of-the-classroom opportunities that can make for

a well-rounded, fulfilling college experience. By broadening your “Why Lehigh” reasons to clubs, organizations and activities—as this student does with the Formula SAE and ASME clubs and plans to join the club soccer and golf teams—you can show Lehigh that you plan to play an active role in its campus community.

If you have to choose, pick substance over style. With a pretty tight word limit, you want every character to count. If you feel like you can be poetic *and* coherently convey why Lehigh is the school for you, go for it. If that seems impossible, it’s okay to prioritize content over poetry, as this author does.

HOW TO WRITE LEHIGH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #3

A compelling characteristic of Lehigh’s community is that our students want to be actively engaged in their learning, their community, and the world. Our students look to make a difference and have a real-world impact. We expect our community to challenge your viewpoint, your naturalized assumptions, and the way that you see the world around you. Lehigh University is committed to being an anti-racist institution. By this, we mean actively speaking out and addressing acts of racism, racist comments, racist practices, policies, and procedures.

What would you want to be different in your own country or community to respond to issues of inequality, inequity, or injustice? (100-300 words)

This prompt is incredibly important. It’s exciting that schools like Lehigh are incorporating anti-racism into their applications because it demonstrates a dedication to acknowledging how deeply ingrained race is in our relationships with others and ourselves. It’s also timely because it coincides with the anti-racism movement spurred by Black Lives Matter protests. Before you start writing, do some research and educate yourself about race and anti-racism. Here are a few resources to get you started:

Articles:

[The Case for Reparations](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates

[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) by Peggy McIntosh

[A Brief History of Slavery](#) by The NY Times

[The White Savior Industrial Complex](#) by Teju Cole

Books:

[White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard For White People to Talk About Racism](#) by Robin DiAngelo

[How to Be an Antiracist](#) by Ibram X. Kendi

[The New Jim Crow](#) by Michelle Alexander

Podcasts:

[“Wake”](#) - Still Processing (NY Times)

[“A Decade of Watching Black People Die”](#) - Code Switch (NPR)

[The 1619 Project](#) - NY Times

[Seeing White](#) - Scene on Radio

Note that this list is by no means comprehensive; it’s just a push to get you to start thinking more critically about how race influences the way we’re treated and interact with the world around us. You can find a larger list of resources we love [on this document](#) (credit to Anna Stamborski, Nikki Zimmermann, and Bailie Gregory).

You might also find it useful to strike up a conversation with your family members or friends about anti-racism to see what you can learn from their experiences. This is the kind of prompt you should take your time with because the words you use have a tremendous power to alienate and offend if they aren’t backed by thorough research.

After that, spend some time recording your thoughts in whatever way feels most organic to you. **You could draw a mindmap, record yourself on voice memos, or just do a good old-fashioned journal entry.** Anything to get your initial thoughts, questions, concerns, or feelings out of your head and into the world.

Now, look back at the prompt and think of how your thoughts might interact with it. Start highlighting lines or phrases that feel relevant, and use the prompt as a way to restructure or reanalyze your essay. Start connecting those relevant ideas to specific moments, classes, people, or events in your life.

In a sense, you’re sort of writing a manifesto, a personal reflection on how you understand race and its impact on your life. **It’s okay to admit to feeling doubtful or unsure in your essay. It’s okay to pose more questions than answers.** The key is to show that you’re taking time to think things through on a deeper level.

These are complex issues that no one person can solve themselves, but Lehigh wants to see you doing your part by joining the larger discussion. **Ultimately, the best way to write this essay is to open yourself up to different perspectives, thoroughly grapple with a diverse range of ideas, and then take the time you need to internalize their messages.** That process will look different for everyone based on their own identities and contexts, so there’s no “one size fits all” approach to writing this essay.

Here’s an example essay that was written for a different prompt, but would work well here with some tweaks, additions, and a few small cuts for word count:

Throughout my time studying at US institutions, I have noticed that cross-cultural understanding is often unilateral, with racial minorities learning about and assimilating into the U.S. mainstream culture. As a result, cultural minority groups are often marginalized,

their representation lacking and voices unheard. As the chair of the Chinese Speaking Student Association, I have worked to foster true, bi-directional cultural understanding and diversity in my school through media productions.

This past spring, in cooperation with the Global Engagement Office at NMH, I took on a project to showcase Chinese culture in my school community. When quarantining at home, my peers and I filmed ourselves cooking Chinese cuisines, spending time with our families, and navigating remote study. Putting together these clips, I created a snapshot video entitled “NMH @ China.” Well-received by the faculty, the video was later published on our school website and social media accounts. Witnessing the number of views rising and appreciative comments emerging, I was proud to have made my virtual campus more culturally diverse.

Unfortunately, cultural misunderstandings deepened as the pandemic spread. Afraid that the biases against China on American news outlets would affect how my school views Chinese students, I made an interview-based video for my American Literature class project. I recorded my conversations with my family to showcase how the lives of Chinese people are influenced by the pandemic. My parents, grandparents, and other family members described their experiences buying groceries, watching the news, and exploring fun activities to do at home. Through the video, I conveyed the message that in such global crises, the first and foremost task is international cooperation, rather than distrust and accusation. By watching this video, the new CSSA students were able to get to know the upperclassmen without being on campus, which brought together CSSA members and allowed us to support one another during a lonely and divisive time. More importantly, this video promoted unity and understanding across cultures by making Chinese representation on campus more visible.

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Tips + Analysis

Use the concrete to frame the hypothetical. The question posed in the prompt—“*What would you want to be different in your own country or community to further principles of equality, equity, or social justice?*”—points toward changes you would like to see in your community or country, but writing only about hypothetical changes can be tough to do well, as it can lead to broad or vague phrasing and focus. One way to avoid that problem is to talk about concrete instances and link them to the changes you would want to see. And while you don’t necessarily have to have already taken steps yourself in helping to effect those changes (you could, for example, perhaps discuss concrete examples of racism in your community and how you want them to be different), one strength of the above example is that the student has worked to combat racial marginalization and promote diversity and understanding.

Be sure to address the prompt. Even though the above example was written for a different prompt, it's a solid option for this one. But one way it could be tweaked to fit it even better would be, at the end of the essay, to add or shift some phrasing to more directly discuss the "*What would you want to be different...?*" We're mentioning this in part because, since more and more schools are including prompts that discuss things like diversity, some students might take a **super-essay approach** here, which can be great and save you a bunch of time writing. But the actual question posed in this Lehigh prompt is different enough from some other schools' diversity prompts that you'd want to make sure that you shifted language to address it (rather than, for example, just talking about your experiences with diversity, why they matter to you, and how they've shaped you).