

500 Prompts for Narrative and Personal Writing

Childhood Memories

1. What was your most precious childhood possession?
2. What were your favorite childhood shows and characters?
3. What were your favorite picture books when you were little?
4. What things did you create when you were a child?
5. What places do you remember fondly from childhood?
6. Have you ever felt embarrassed by things you used to like?
7. Do you wish you could return to moments from your past?
8. Was there a toy you wanted as a child but never got?
9. What objects tell the story of your life?
10. What are your best sleepover memories?
11. What's the best gift you've ever given or received?
12. What's the most memorable thing you ever got in the mail?
13. What nicknames have you ever gotten or given?

Coming of Age

14. What have you learned in your teens?
15. What personal achievements make you proud?
16. What are some recent moments of happiness in your life?
17. What are you grateful for?
18. What rites of passage have you participated in?
19. What advice would you give younger kids about middle or high school?
20. What can older people learn from your generation?
21. What do older generations misunderstand about yours?

Family

22. Who is your family?
23. What have you and your family accomplished together?
24. What events have brought you closer to your family?

25. What's your role in your family?
26. Have you ever changed a family member's mind?
27. How do you define 'family'?
28. What are your family stories of sacrifice?
29. What possessions does your family treasure?
30. What hobbies have been passed down in your family?
31. How much do you know about your family's history?
32. Did your parents have a life before they had kids?
33. How close are you to your parents?
34. How are you and your parents alike and different?
35. Do your parents support your learning?
36. What have your parents taught you about money?
37. Do you expect your parents to give you money?
38. How permissive are your parents?
39. Do you have helicopter parents?
40. How do your parents teach you to behave?
41. How do you make parenting difficult for your parents?
42. If you drink or use drugs, do your parents know?
43. Do you talk about report cards with your parents?
44. Would you mind if your parents blogged about you?
45. How well do you get along with your siblings?
46. How well do you know your pet?
47. What role do pets play in your family?
48. What is your racial and ethnic identity?
49. Have you ever tried to hide your racial or ethnic identity?
50. How do you feel about your last name?
51. What's the story behind your name?
52. What are your favorite names?
53. How have you paid tribute to loved ones?

Community and Home

54. Would you most want to live in a city, a suburb or the country?
55. How much does your neighborhood define who you are?
56. What's special about your hometown?
57. What would you name your neighborhood?



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58. Who is the 'mayor' of your school or neighborhood?
59. Who are the 'characters' that make your town interesting?
60. What would a TV show about your town spoof?
61. What 'urban legends' are there about places in your area?
62. What local problems do you think your mayor should try to solve?
63. Do you know your way around your city or town?
64. Have you ever interacted with the police?
65. How often do you interact with people of another race or ethnicity?
66. Who would be the ideal celebrity neighbor?
67. What is your favorite place?
68. How much time do you spend in nature?
69. What small things have you seen and taken note of today?
70. What would your dream home be like?
71. What is your favorite place in your house?
72. How important is keeping a clean house?
73. Is your bedroom a nightmare?
74. Do you plan on saving any of your belongings for the future?
75. With your home in danger, what would you try to save?
76. What would you put in your emergency 'go-bag'?
77. Have you ever lost (or found) something valuable?
92. How productive and organized are you?
93. How would your life be different if you had better listening skills?
94. How competitive are you?
95. Do you perform better when you're competing or when you're collaborating?
96. Do you take more risks when you are around your friends?
97. Do you unknowingly submit to peer pressure?
98. How much of a daredevil are you?
99. What pranks, jokes, hoaxes or tricks have you ever fallen for or perpetrated?
100. How do you react when provoked?
101. How often do you cry?
102. Do you think you're brave?
103. What are you afraid of?
104. What are your fears and phobias?
105. What are your personal superstitions?
106. Do you like being alone?
107. How impulsive are you?
108. Are you a novelty-seeker?
109. What annoys you?
110. Do you apologize too much?
111. Do you have good manners?
112. Are you a saver or a tosser?
113. Are you more introvert or extrovert?
114. Are you popular, quirky or conformist?
115. Are you a nerd or a geek?
116. What would your personal mascot be?
117. What assumptions do people make about you?

Personality

78. What is your personal credo?
79. What motivates you?
80. What makes you happy?
81. What are you good at?
82. How much self-control do you have?
83. How good are you at waiting for what you really want?
84. What role does procrastination play in your life?
85. When in your life have you been a leader?
86. How well do you perform under pressure?
87. How well do you take criticism?
88. Are you hard or easy on yourself?
89. How full is your glass?
90. Do you have a hard time making decisions?
91. How good are you at time management?

Overcoming Adversity

118. What challenges have you overcome?
119. What do you do when you encounter obstacles to success?
120. What are your secret survival strategies?
121. How do you find peace in your life?
122. How have you handled being the 'new kid'?
123. Do you ever feel overlooked and underappreciated?
124. How stressed are you?
125. How do you relieve stress?
126. Does stress affect your ability to make good decisions?
127. What challenges have you set for yourself?
128. How often do you leave your 'comfort zone'?



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129. What did you once hate but now like?
130. Does your life leave you enough time to relax?
131. Do you set rules for yourself about how you use your time?
132. Is 'doing nothing' a good use of your time?
133. What's cluttering up your life?
134. What work went into reaching your most difficult goals?
135. When have you ever failed at something? What happened as a result?
136. When have you ever succeeded when you thought you might fail?
137. What life lessons has adversity taught you?
138. What's the most challenging assignment you've ever had?
139. What kind of feedback helps you improve?
140. Is trying too hard to be happy making you sad?
141. Do adults who are 'only trying to help' sometimes make things worse?
142. What are five everyday problems that bother you, and what can you do about them?

Gender and Sexuality

143. How do male and female roles differ in your family?
144. Do parents have different hopes and standards for their sons than for their daughters?
145. Is there too much pressure on girls to have 'perfect' bodies?
146. How much pressure do boys face to have the perfect body?
147. How did you learn about sex?
148. How should parents address Internet pornography?
149. What experiences have you had with gender bias in school?
150. What have been your experiences with catcalling or other kinds of street harassment?
151. Do you know boys who regard girls as 'prey'?
152. Do you consider yourself a feminist?

Morality and Religion

153. How do you help?
154. What ethical dilemmas have you faced?
155. Would you help an injured stranger?

156. When is the last time you did something nice for a stranger?
157. Have you ever 'paid it forward'?
158. How much do you gossip?
159. How comfortable are you with lying?
160. Have you ever taken something you weren't supposed to?
161. What could you live without?
162. Do you ever feel guilty about what, or how much, you throw away?
163. Do you ever eavesdrop?
164. How important is your spiritual life?
165. Do you believe that everything happens for a reason?
166. Can you be good without God?
167. Are you less religious than your parents?
168. Can you pass a basic religion test?
169. What can you learn from other religions?

Role Models

170. Who is your role model?
171. Who are your heroes?
172. Who inspires you?
173. What's the best advice you've gotten?
174. Who outside your family has made a difference in your life?
175. If you had your own talk show, whom would you want to interview?
176. To whom, or what, would you like to write a thank-you note?
177. What leader would you invite to speak at your school?
178. What six people, living or dead, would you invite to dinner?

Technology and Video Games

179. Are you distracted by technology?
180. Do you always have your phone or tablet at your side?
181. What tech tools play the biggest role in your life?
182. What new technologies or tech toys are you most excited about?
183. To what piece of technology would you write a 'love letter'?
184. Does your digital life have side effects?
185. Do apps help you or just waste your time?



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186. Do you spend too much time on smart phones playing 'stupid games'?
187. When do you choose making a phone call over sending a text?
188. Do you know how to code? Would you like to learn?
189. Whom would you share your passwords with?
190. What are your favorite video games?
191. What have you learned playing video games?
192. Do you play violent video games?
193. When should you feel guilty for killing zombies?
194. Who are your opponents in online gaming?
195. Do you like watching other people play video games?

The Internet

196. How careful are you online?
197. Do you ever seek advice on the Internet?
198. How do you know if what you read online is true?
199. How much do you trust online reviews?
200. How do you use Wikipedia?
201. What are your favorite Internet spoofs?
202. What are your favorite viral videos?
203. What would you teach the world in an online video?
204. What are your experiences with Internet-based urban legends?
205. What story does your personal data tell?
206. Do you worry about the lack of anonymity in the digital age?
207. Do you wish you had more privacy online?
208. Have you ever been scammed?

Social Media

209. How do you use Facebook?
210. What is your Facebook persona?
211. What memorable experiences have you had on Facebook?
212. Does Facebook ever make you feel bad?
213. Would you consider deleting your Facebook account?
214. Do you have 'Instagram envy'?
215. Do you use Twitter?
216. Why do you share photos?
217. How do you archive your life?

218. Have you ever posted, emailed or texted something you wish you could take back?
219. Have you ever sent an odd message because of auto-correct?
220. Would you want your photo or video to go viral?
221. Do you worry colleges or employers might read your social media posts someday?

Music

222. What are you listening to?
223. Who in your life introduces you to new music?
224. How much is your taste in music based on what your friends like?
225. What music inspires you?
226. How closely do you listen to lyrics?
227. Which pop music stars fascinate you?
228. Who is your favorite pop diva?
229. What's your karaoke song?
230. What song/artist pairings would you like to hear?

Movies, Theater and Television

231. What were the best movies you saw in the past year?
232. What movies do you watch, or reference, over and over?
233. What movies, shows or books do you wish had sequels, spinoffs or new episodes?
234. Do you like horror movies?
235. Who are your favorite movie stars?
236. Would you pay extra for a 3-D movie?
237. What is your favorite comedy?
238. What are the best live theatrical performances you've ever seen?
239. Have you ever stumbled upon a cool public performance?
240. What role does television play in your life and the life of your family?
241. What television shows have mattered to you?
242. Do your television viewing habits include 'binge-watching'?
243. How often do you watch a television show when it originally airs?
244. What old television shows would you bring back?
245. Why do we like reality shows so much?
246. What ideas do you have for a reality show?
247. What are your favorite commercials?



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248. How much are you influenced by advertising?

Reading, Writing and Fine Arts

- 249. Read any good books lately?
- 250. Do you read for pleasure?
- 251. What are your favorite books and authors?
- 252. What are the best things you've read, watched, heard or played this year?
- 253. What are your favorite young adult novels?
- 254. What's on your summer reading list?
- 255. What memorable poetry have you ever read or heard?
- 256. What are your favorite cartoons?
- 257. What magazines do you read, and how do you read them?
- 258. Do you enjoy reading tabloid gossip?
- 259. When have you seen yourself and your life reflected in a book or other media?
- 260. Do you prefer your children's book characters obedient or contrary?
- 261. Do you read e-books?
- 262. Would you trade your paper books for digital versions?
- 263. To what writer would you award a prize?
- 264. Why do you write?
- 265. Do you keep a diary or journal?
- 266. Do you have a blog?
- 267. Do you want to write a book?
- 268. When do you write by hand?
- 269. Do you write in cursive?
- 270. Do you write in your books?
- 271. What 'mundane moments' from your life might make great essay material?
- 272. What's the coolest thing you've ever seen in a museum?
- 273. What are the most memorable works of visual art you have seen?
- 274. What are your favorite works of art?

Language and Speech

- 275. What are your favorite and least favorite words?
- 276. What words or phrases do you think are overused?
- 277. How much slang do you use? What are your favorite (printable) words?
- 278. How much do you curse? Why?

279. Why do so many people say 'like' and 'totally' all the time?

280. Do you sometimes 'hide' behind irony?

281. How good is your grammar?

282. What new emoticons does the world need?

283. Are you fluent in vocal fry, creaky voice or uptalk?

284. How much information is 'too much information'?

285. When did you last have a great conversation?

286. Do you speak a second, or third, language?

287. When do you remember learning a new word?

School and Teachers

288. Do you like school?

289. What are you really learning at school?

290. What are you looking forward to, or dreading, this school year?

291. Would you want to be home-schooled?

292. Would you like to take a class online?

293. Would you rather attend a public or a private high school?

294. How would you grade your school?

295. What can other schools learn — and copy — from your school?

296. Is your school day too short?

297. What do you hope to get out of high school?

298. Do you have too much homework?

299. Does your homework help you learn?

300. What is your best subject?

301. What memorable experiences have you had in learning science or math?

302. Are you afraid of math?

303. Do we need a new way to teach math?

304. What are the best ways to learn about history?

305. How would you do on a civics test?

306. How important is arts education?

307. What is your most memorable writing assignment?

308. What would you like to have memorized?

309. Does your school value students' digital skills?

310. What was your favorite field trip?

311. Do you participate in class?

312. What are your best tips for studying?

313. Do you use study guides?



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- 314. Is everything you've been taught about study habits wrong?
- 315. How well do you think standardized tests measure your abilities?
- 316. Do you have a tutor?
- 317. Are your grades inflated?
- 318. When has a teacher inspired you?
- 319. What teacher do you appreciate?
- 320. What teacher would you like to thank?
- 321. What do you wish your teachers knew about you?
- 322. Do your test scores reflect how good your teachers are?
- 323. Do your teachers use technology well?

School Social Environment

- 324. What role do school clubs and teams play in your life?
- 325. Who has the power in school social life?
- 326. How big a problem is bullying or cyberbullying in your school or community?
- 327. Does your school seem integrated?
- 328. What's the racial makeup of your school?
- 329. Do you ever 'mix it up' and socialize with different people at school?
- 330. Can students at your school talk openly about their mental health issues?
- 331. Is your school a 'party school'?
- 332. How common is drug use in your school?
- 333. Do you know people who cheat on high-stakes tests?
- 334. How does your school deal with students who misbehave?
- 335. How much does your life in school intersect with your life outside school?
- 336. Would you ever go through hazing to be part of a group?

Senior Year, College and Applications

- 337. Where do you want to go to college?
- 338. What are your sources for information about colleges and universities?
- 339. Is college overrated?
- 340. How much does the SAT or ACT matter in your life?

- 341. What personal essay topic would you assign to college applicants?
- 342. What qualities would you look for in a college roommate?
- 343. What would you do with a gap year?
- 344. What makes a graduation ceremony memorable?
- 345. How do you feel about proms?

Work and Careers

- 346. What are your longtime interests or passions?
- 347. Do you have a life calling?
- 348. What do you want to do with your life?
- 349. Do you think you will have a career that you love?
- 350. What investment are you willing to make to get your dream job?
- 351. Would you consider a nontraditional occupation?
- 352. Would you want to be a teacher?
- 353. What hidden talents might you have?
- 354. What do you hope to be doing the year after you graduate from college?
- 355. Would you rather work from home or in an office?
- 356. What career or technical classes do you wish your school offered?
- 357. What 'back-to-the-land' skills do you have, or wish you had?
- 358. What have you made yourself?
- 359. What would you create if you had funding?
- 360. How did you start doing something you love?
- 361. Did you ever take a break from doing something you love?
- 362. What have you done to earn money?
- 363. Do you have a job?
- 364. Would you quit if your values did not match your employer's?
- 365. What are your attitudes toward money?
- 366. Can money buy you happiness?
- 367. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
- 368. What do you want to be doing when you're 80?
- 369. Do you want to live to 100?
- 370. What do you want your obituary to say?

Dating and Friendship

- 371. Have you ever been in love?



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- 372. What are the most meaningful relationships in your life?
- 373. What advice would you give to somebody who just started dating?
- 374. What are the basic 'rules' for handling breakups?
- 375. What are your beliefs about marriage?
- 376. Are you allowed to date?
- 377. Is dating a thing of the past?
- 378. Do you have a best friend?
- 379. How do you feel about introducing friends from different parts of your life?
- 380. How should you handle the end of a friendship?
- 381. How often do you have 'deep discussions'?

Sports, Exercise and Games

- 382. Do you like to exercise?
- 383. How has exercise changed your health, your body or your life?
- 384. Why do you play sports?
- 385. What is the most memorable sporting event you've ever watched or played in?
- 386. What's the most impressive sports moment you've seen?
- 387. When has a sports team most disappointed you?
- 388. What sports teams do you root for?
- 389. Does being a fan help define who you are?
- 390. How far would you go to express loyalty to your favorite teams?
- 391. What fan memorabilia would you pay big bucks for?
- 392. What rules would you like to see changed in your favorite sports?
- 393. What game would you like to redesign?
- 394. What are your favorite games?

Travel

- 395. Where in the world would you travel if you could?
- 396. What is your fantasy vacation?
- 397. What would your fantasy road trip be like?
- 398. What crazy adventure would you want to take?
- 399. How has travel affected you?
- 400. What famous landmarks have you visited?
- 401. What's the coolest thing you've ever seen in nature?

- 402. What are the best souvenirs you've ever collected while traveling?
- 403. Would you like to live in another country?
- 404. Would you want to be a space tourist?

Looks, Fashion and Health

- 405. What does your hairstyle say about you?
- 406. How far would you go for fashion?
- 407. What are the hot fashion trends at your school right now?
- 408. Do you have a signature clothing item?
- 409. Has anyone ever said that you look like someone famous?
- 410. Would you ever consider getting a tattoo?
- 411. What are your opinions on cosmetic surgery?
- 412. Do Photoshopped images make you feel bad about your own looks?
- 413. What are your sleep habits?
- 414. How much of a priority do you make sleep?
- 415. Do you get enough sleep?
- 416. What health tips have worked for you?

Shopping and Driving

- 417. What's your favorite store? Why?
- 418. To what company would you write a letter of complaint or admiration?
- 419. To what business would you like to give advice?
- 420. How would you make over your mall?
- 421. Do you shop at locally owned businesses?
- 422. What are the best things you've acquired secondhand?
- 423. How important is it to have a driver's license?
- 424. Are you a good driver?

Food and Eating

- 425. What are the most memorable meals you've ever had?
- 426. What's your favorite holiday food memory?
- 427. What's your comfort food?
- 428. What are your favorite junk foods?
- 429. What food would you like to judge in a taste-off?
- 430. Do you prefer your tacos 'authentic' or 'appropriated'?
- 431. Do you pay attention to nutrition labels on food?
- 432. How concerned are you about where your food comes from?



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- 433. Are your eating habits healthy?
- 434. What are your 'food rules'?
- 435. Do you eat too quickly?
- 436. What do you eat during the school day?
- 437. Do you eat cafeteria food?
- 438. How much food does your family waste?
- 439. What messages about food and eating have you learned from your family?
- 440. What's your favorite restaurant?
- 441. What restaurant would you most like to review?
- 442. Do you cook?
- 443. What would you most like to learn to cook or bake?

Holidays, Seasons, Weather and Weekends

- 444. How can people make the most of long holiday weekends?
- 445. What's your Sunday routine?
- 446. What's on your fall fashion shopping list?
- 447. Will you be wearing a Halloween costume this year?
- 448. Do you like scary movies and books?
- 449. Do you believe in ghosts?
- 450. What are your Thanksgiving traditions?
- 451. What are your tips for enjoying the holiday season?
- 452. How will you spend the holiday break?
- 453. Do you make New Year's resolutions?
- 454. How do you fight the winter blues?
- 455. What are your experiences with severe weather?
- 456. How do you feel about Valentine's Day?
- 457. How do you celebrate spring?
- 458. What would your fantasy spring break be like?
- 459. How careful are you in the sun?
- 460. What are you looking forward to this summer?
- 461. What would your ideal summer camp be like?
- 462. What are your favorite summer hangouts?
- 463. What's your favorite summer food?
- 464. What is your favorite summer movie?
- 465. Do you have a summer job?
- 466. Do you choose summer activities to look good on applications?
- 467. What are the best things you did this summer?
- 468. How do you prepare to go back to school?

Beliefs, Politics and Current Events

- 469. How would you like to help our world?
- 470. What cause would get you into the streets?
- 471. What would you risk your life for?
- 472. When have you spoken out about something you felt had to change?
- 473. What would you invent to make the world a better place?
- 474. How do you feel about zoos?
- 475. What is your relationship with guns?
- 476. Do you trust your government?
- 477. Do you know your First Amendment rights?
- 478. Do you worry about terrorism?
- 479. Do you believe in intelligent alien life?
- 480. Given unlimited resources, what scientific or medical problem would you investigate?
- 481. What would you do if you were president?
- 482. Would you vote this year if you could?
- 483. Do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat or independent?
- 484. What event in the past do you wish you could have witnessed?
- 485. What are the most important changes, in your life and in the world, in the last decade?
- 486. What do you remember about Sept. 11, 2001?
- 487. What news stories are you following?
- 488. How do you get your news?
- 489. Why should we care about events in other parts of the world?
- 490. What questions do you have about how the world works?
- 491. What big questions do you have?

If Only...

- 492. What would you do if you won the lottery?
- 493. What superpower do you wish you had?
- 494. What era do you wish you had lived in?
- 495. Would you want to be a tween or teen star?
- 496. Would you want to grow up in the public eye?
- 497. What kind of robot would you want?
- 498. What would you outsource if you could?
- 499. What would you like to learn on your own?
- 500. What would you wait in line for?

