

# UC PIQ's: Tips on How To Answer



Please only ask 2 (no more than 3) people to review your PIQ answers.



- ✓ Answer ALL parts of the question.
- ✓ Your answers should be about YOU! You can mention others but the answer needs to showcase you, the student.
- ✓ Be yourself; use a lot of “I”, “me”, and “my” in your answers. You want the reader to get to know you through your answers. Use your normal vocabulary (academic language, not slang).

- ✓ Be honest about your experiences in your answers.
- ✓ Avoid using acronyms; MCHS stands for Middle College High School, but the reader won't know that.
- ✓ Be clear and concise. The reader needs to know within the first sentence or two where your answer is taking them.

Additional PERSONAL Comments: (located at the end of the PIQ section, where you upload your prompts-550 word limit)

Do this part last, after completing your PIQ answers. **DO NOT USE THIS SECTION TO CONTINUE YOUR PIQ ANSWERS!**

Use this section to clarify or give details about your academic history or personal life that you discussed somewhere else on the app, but you **HAVE NOT MENTIONED IN THE PIQs.**

Example: if you weren't able to provide details about MCHS and how you got into our program, this is a good opportunity to do so. Tell the reader about having to apply in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, over 300 applicants applied, you were one of 75 selected, you started taking college classes as freshmen, tell them if you're on track to earn your AA degree, etc. Tell the reader how different our school is from traditional high schools; we don't have any athletics at MCHS, but you were able to play for your resident high school, etc.

You can also tell them about any grades that you had/have to remediate (retaking classes) if you earned any Ds or Fs.

If you're applying for highly selective majors; **ENGINEERING, COMPUTER SCIENCE, ARCHITECTURE**, and you haven't mentioned **WHY** you're passionate about that major, **USE THAT SECTION TO TELL THEM WHY!**



- ✗ Do not talk about one specific campus in your answers; all the UCs you apply to will see your answers.
- ✗ Don't answer the different questions using the same topic or theme to respond.
- ✗ Don't use the answer as a chance to start creative writing; meaning don't use poetry, or scene setting. The reader wants to read an answer to the questions you've chosen to write about.
- ✗ Don't ask a question in your answer.
- ✗ Don't use inappropriate humor, quotes (the reader wants to know about you and your thoughts), generalizations, “laundry lists” of activities – each answer should mention one (maybe 2) new ideas/thoughts/examples.

Additional ACADEMICS Comments: (located at the end of the section where course names and grades are entered-550 character limit-that will include spaces)

Use this section to explain any academic record that you've not been able to explain elsewhere.

Examples: Explain/Clarify something about your courses; “Middle College High School does not offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses since I'm already taking college classes at Contra Costa College.”

**SOME OF YOU MAY NOT NEED TO USE THIS SECTION, but you can if you choose to.**

Important Information:

Please remember to include details.

Examples: If you are writing about your talents, tell the reader how long you've been honing your talent/skill. If you have a job tell the reader where you work, and how many hours you work a week on average.

Tell the reader about **HARDSHIPS!** They don't know what you've been through/are going through. They are interested in all things about **YOU!** Give them details and explain how it's made you feel. All those experiences help shape us into who we are/will become.

If you written something very personal, believe me the reader is not going to see you as a “sob story”. The UC folks have reassured me that they want to know these types of things about you.

# 3 Levels of Writing:



*Please use this table to make sure your PIQ answers are covering each level.*

(general info)

Level 1:  
FACTS



**WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Introduce TOPIC you've chosen to answer the PIQ

Example: Tutoring

"Over the past 3 years I've been a tutor for my fellow Middle College classmates/students

(description & detailed info)

Level 2:  
INTERPRETATION



**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Give an example or experience

Example: Tutoring

"Four days a week I help other students with various levels of mathematics; from high school algebra to college level math courses."  
"During this pandemic I've learned how to adapt my tutoring skills to help other students on Zoom."

(give deeper thoughts about impact)

Level 3:  
MEANING &  
SIGNIFICANCE



**WHY DOES THIS MATTER?**

How has this experience changed you?

Example: Tutoring

"By providing tutoring to other students I feel a sense of accomplishment because I know that I'm helping my fellow classmates earn passing grades for not only high school courses, but college level classes as well."

"Tutoring online has taught me how to have more patience as most students have no control over technology. I've adapted my skills and I believe it's made me a better tutor for others."