

## Stanford Essays

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**Essay 1:** What matters most to you, and why?

**Essay 2:** Why Stanford?

(Suggested Word Count - essay 1: 750; essay 2: 400; total = 1150 words)

<http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/programs/mba/admission/application-materials/essays>

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## Important

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### Megaron PATTERN for Document Exchange

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It is important to follow a pattern, so everyone can identify and understand all files. **All application documents sent to Megaron must be named under the following pattern**

#### 01.) Naming the document

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Applicant LastName\_School\_document type\_version\_name abbreviation or nickname of last author

Example: For the essays of applicant Gabriella Silva

Silva\_HBS\_essays\_04\_gabi: 4th version of Harvard essays, last modified by the applicant.

#### 02.) Headers

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Every essay opening must indicate: School name; the essay question; the word-limit for that essay; the word count of the current version.

Example: HBS: Essay 1 - What is your definition of success? (250 words)

Now: 320

#### 03.) Clean Copies

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**WHENEVER** either Carlos or Mirian sends you an altered or edited document, you should send back your next version without any of their track change marks, that is, in a clean copy.

#### 04.) All essays should be sent in one 'Word file'

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**ALWAYS** send us **ALL essays** of the same school in **ONE FILE**.

**NEVER** send individual essay questions. Thus, even if for example you have altered essay 4, send us the entire file with all six essays.

## David

### Essay 1: What matters most to you, and why? (750 words)

You can categorize human abilities in two classes: the instrumental and the expressive ones. Instrumental skills are the ones we learn so that we can cope with environment's demands - they are survival tools - they are imposed from the "outside." On the other hand, expressive skills refer to actions that externalize our subjective experiences. Singing a song that reflects how we feel or translating our moods into a dance is a form of expression. When involved in an expressive activity I feel in touch with my real self. I want to lead a life in which I can express my creativity.

Creativity takes courage. In elementary school, drawing, painting, and everything related to colors on paper were my favorite activities. A bit older, I longed for my weekly Arts class. Later, as I attended one semester of high school as an exchange student in England, I could devote more to arts as an elective course. I felt motivated to find out that I could submit one piece of work to an arts competition. I chose to mix pastel and watercolor techniques in my work, but unfortunately, in the middle of the job I made a mistake. I accidentally spilled paint and part of my ocean was really blotted. I would not be able to fix the mistake in time for submission, so I decided to finish it freely and without worrying about the competition. In the end, it was awarded second prize among almost 200 works. This was not the most significant competition I enrolled and that was not my best painting, either, but I saw that award as a symbol of my self-discovery. At age 14 and all alone on foreign grounds, I kept faith in my own opinion of aesthetics. I believe in the value of unique experiences that a person can have in life.

Creativity is an act of defiance. "Why not?" - the power of those two words defined the way I see the world. I learned those words from two people who think quite differently from most people. My parents were not fond of tradition. Searching for answers, they were open to trying different beliefs. Ignoring their families' objection, my parents moved in together when they were very young. Soon after graduating from college, my father, an only child, chose not to join his father's successful company and instead, took my mother to the countryside. I grew up surrounded by nature. My parents encouraged me to question the status quo to better understand how things worked. I was never satisfied with the way things were and would thus always suggest a change for better. Every "why not" I ask will help me consider possibilities before I take action or make decisions. George Bernard Shaw has my favorite quote: "Some men and women see things as they are and say why; I dream things that never were and say why not?" I identify myself with people who leave their signature on everything they do in life.

Creativity and Curiosity are twin brothers. Living far from big cities, we were not, nevertheless, away from Knowledge. I was eight when I finally went to a rural school, the only one in the area. Before that, my father was my tutor. Until today he is fond of homeschooling. I studied quantitative subjects with dad, an agricultural engineer aficionado for physics. I discovered art and music with mom. They stimulated my curiosity so that I could often learn further about any subject. I still cherish my now worn out "Big Book of Why: 1,001 Facts Kids Want to Know." Every evening, my father, my brother and I selected one fact and discussed it enthusiastically. I understand that curiosity is one of the permanent and certain characteristics of a creative mind.

A person who lives only by instrumental actions without experiencing the spontaneous flow of expressivity eventually becomes indistinguishable from a robot who has been programmed by aliens to mimic human behavior. I want to lead a life full of expressive actions.

### Essay 2: Why Stanford?

Upon graduating, I intend to grow as an innovative leader inside XXX Education Practice, my MBA sponsor, and, in the long term, create my own organization focused on the intertwined frontiers, Education and Technology. The love for connecting multiple fields of knowledge is something I have inherited from my upbringing (essay 1). I feel creative when I have to navigate smoothly and coherently across disciplinary frontiers. At Stanford, I will explore my creativity.

The need to understand complexity encouraged me to follow a career in the Academia. Discussing my plans with my supervisor, I learned about his old wish: create an interface to identify emotions and act upon them with verbal reactions. The main hardship in this endeavor was to insert "emotions" in the platform. In plain English: "how could we make synthesized voices sound neutral, sad or happy?" I embraced that challenge wholeheartedly. Our goal was to build unit selection voice that could portray emotions. Among many challenges was the fact that no one had ever successfully synthesized emotional. Another challenge was the language - no attempt whatsoever had been made in Portuguese. My professor proposed giving up this aspect and just let the machine release robotized sounds. I convinced him to let me try and told him that we could not simply translate existing models. I ignored the already published





## Sophia

### Essay 1: What matters most to you, and why? (750 words)

Two distinct life events defined my comprehension of what is important to me. With my dad, I learned that I must be the agent of change in my life; with my mother, I understood that my actions upon the world are only meaningful if they cause impact on the people around me.

I am proud to have a father who changed his family's social conditions. As the older son of a big family, he took upon himself the responsibility as the agent of change in the social conditions that the world had apparently reserved for them. Unlike his family and friends, he chose to leave his small village and turn his life around by attending high school in a neighbor, bigger city. Later, going back and forth, he spent four years traveling every day to the capital to continue to study. Through this sacrifice, he became the first in the entire family and the only among seven children to have a college degree. Instantly, he became the positive reference in the family. My father's history taught me that courage and resilience lead you to change the status quo, apparently unchangeable, of what you go through in life. Since I was a little girl, I have heard constantly "all you need is a very clear plan showing where you are and where you want to be." By then I promised myself I would never accommodate: "I will never be mediocre."

My mother taught me in the most possible realistic way to leave our selfish nature aside so that we could see what others needed. One day, all of a sudden, by my mother's influence, my parents shared their idea of adopting a child. I was barely 11 when I was told that I could have a new "sister." Not fully aware of what would happen, I shared their enthusiasm. Without any doubt, that seven-year-old orphan moved in and changed my life forever. Soon I would be sharing all I had, everything, with a stranger. But I was also able to show Maria a world of possibilities. At the time I was not aware of my action, but looking back I know I helped her question her future. Her mother did not care about sending any of the nine children to school. All of them, Maria included, should "work" to bring money some change. Maria sold candy at the traffic light or simply begged for money and food outside restaurants. My parents and I could show Maria the meaning of family. In our house, she benefited from a caring family and enjoyed the opportunity to learn. Sometimes my parents took us to Maria's former house and I could observe the harsh reality of her biological family. Maria grew up into a different person from all her siblings. A social assistant, she is fully aware of her role of transforming the lives of many children. My mother also allowed me to rethink my little world. She helped me place more value on my relationship with them. It is not easy to change when you feel comfortable - I had everything I wanted as a happy child, but I was somewhat alienated in a safe environment. It is difficult to see your position within a group.

Since I remember I have dreamed of doing something transformational. More recently I learned that I can only feel fulfilled when I can influence positively people around me.

### Essay 2: Why Stanford?

I've nurtured a career path that values professionals who know how to articulate individual actions with collective efforts. I am good at defining, establishing, identifying, and translating a direction for collective action by followers. My story explains why I feel the need for a Stanford MBA.

When I entered college, I strongly believed that my professional success would depend exclusively on my effort, interest, and analytical capacity. Everything happened in France when I did my research on Institute of Robotics at the French Aerospace Center. Science and technology thrilled me with intellectual challenges. Research demanded sophisticated analyses, but did not allow me to synthesize impactful end-product solutions. Since I stood out among the researchers, I was invited to do my Ph.D. there. In a discussion with a professor on a technical detail, I suddenly had a breakthrough moment: "I could not spend my life in that lab discussing what only two or three technicians in the entire country could understand. I need to insert the people factor in my professional life." I noticed that I needed those elements on a daily basis to achieve the balance I was looking for. I came back to Brazil and joined a Big-4 management consulting firm.

Acting temporarily as a post-MBA associate in one specific assignment, I realized that there is so much regarding leadership that I must still learn. As a consultant, I have to learn about balancing the work and life pressures. In this specific engagement, I realized that I got completely lost as I attempted to balance my personal life with a scenario that was testing my skills and resistance. In my three years of consulting, I have seen many directors get divorced; partners that miss their children's birthday celebrations; I even witnessed one of my mentors having a crisis of identity. These are not inspiring leaders. Since I was responsible for one analyst, I felt frustrated to perceive that I













people who would work on the plan. I perceived at this time that the growth of companies and the increase in entrepreneurial ventures in Brazil would call for a new type of leader, one able to blend intellectual capacity, familiarity with Brazil, attraction to risk, business judgment, and people skills. I want to be such leader.

After the MBA, I want to return to XXX, my PE fund, in order to lead the firm's VC activities in Latin America.

## Igor

### Essay 1: What matters most to you, and why? (750 words)

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are tepid, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”  
Apocalypse

The psychologist Gary Klein invented my favorite method for making decisions. He calls it the "premortem". It is pathetically simple: you imagine yourself in the future, after the project you're considering has ended in complete failure, total fiasco. Unlike a standard assessment session, which asks you what might go wrong, the "premortem" operates on the assumption that everything went as badly as you could have feared. It's already over. You're totally screwed. Now: what? Knowing that you are dead provides a miraculous power. Impotence? Not at all. I leave each "premortem session" reinvigorated about my belief that I want to be the owner of my fate in the world. Perhaps Klein's technique works with me, for I have already empirically tested it.

Days before my 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was diagnosed with encephalitis. Although I was not fully conscious of that fact at the time, the illness made me resilient. It also made me confident to face challenges that life would present. Of course, I could also rely on my parents, who were always there for me. We never spoke about the high risk of death that I was running. Instead, we would pray together, faithfully. They never lost hope even when I entered a comma that lasted a couple of days. When I opened my eyes slowly and smiled, I made my father cry. I was born again, according to the doctors. As a family, we felt victorious. Another, even more difficult, challenge would come later. Raised by a housewife and a mason in the outskirts of Belo Horizonte, I had little chance of succeeding in life. My parents would hardly read and their writing was limited to signing their names. Like the vast majority of the population in my neighborhood, my friends did not go past elementary school. Today they keep jobs that require little intellectual ability. Unfortunately, their kids are following the same path. My future, according to my mother, depended on how much I studied. I needed a plan, an obviously bold plan. I promised her that I would break that poverty cycle, so I did all I could to win a scholarship in a private school. While many friends arrived in comfortable cars after a short ride, I used dad's old bike to cover the almost 7 km to the school downtown. The bus was a luxury reserved for very rainy days. After high school, I studied even harder to attend a preparatory course for college tests. Meanwhile my dad would start working in a construction 150 km away from the capital. I was so focused on my goal that I found the strength to travel 6 hours every day to school (3 hours to go and another 3 to return). I did not know this back then, but I was preparing myself for social mobility. Eventually I would be part of the 1% of people in Brazil who go to college. I took the time on the bus to review the subject and to do homework. Eventually, I was accepted to the country's best Engineering School (rate of admission is 0.7%). I paid my promise. My main inspiration was my grandmother. After she lost her fifth child to lack of resources/conditions in the countryside of Bahia, she arrived in Belo Horizonte with four children and, without knowing anyone, made herself a promise: "Never again will I let another kid of mine die in such conditions." Initially homeless, she eventually found a room in the back of a restaurant where she worked for forty years before retiring.

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything – all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. There is no reason not to follow my, not tepid, but hot heart.

### Essay 2: Why Stanford?

Brazil, my home country, has lived dramatic transformation in the past three or four decades. It has grown into a democratic nation, learned to eliminate soaring inflation, gone through privatization, and seen per capita income rise significantly. Nevertheless, much has to happen in my country's economic scenario. Private investments must increase, capital markets need to mature, and entrepreneurs have to be better prepared. I want to apply my courage to my career ambition - grow into a Venture Capitalist.

With Brazil enjoying a more stable situation in the recent years, both our government and foreign investors have had the nation under their spotlight. However, there is still a huge distance between investors and entrepreneurs. My business knowledge, technical expertise, and familiarity with differences, obtained by living through different social classes, I feel eager to help reduce that gap. My support to entrepreneurs shall enable them to structure their businesses while we seek investors for funding.

As someone interested in influencing other lives, I regard entrepreneurship as a way to nurture such interest. My plans sound plausible, mainly now that my country is more connected with developed economies - domestic companies are prospering abroad while international entrepreneurs are exploring our fertile ground. Relying on my experience, I will enjoy Brazil's momentum to create my company.

While running my own company, I can continue to help others succeed. I took great satisfaction from supporting entrepreneurs with pro-bono consulting services during college and I plan to develop the growth of high-potential ventures. I am certain that in California I can adequately prepare myself to reach my objective. Stanford is surrounded by VC funds, so I can build valuable network and explore the industry. Finally, the school's focus on entrepreneurship is vital for me to shape the beginning of my new career.

Ultimately, I identify with the school. I was told that one professor once revealed to his class that he had gone bankrupt three times. I am well acquainted with this experience. Stanford wants people who dare to fail.

## Laura

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### Essay 1: What matters most to you, and why? (750 words)

The Latin locution for "being alive" was "inter hominem esse", which literally meant "to be among men"; whereas "to be dead" was "inter hominem esse desinere", or "to cease to be among men." In life, I always choose "to be alive."

I have always felt in debt with my father, who helped shape my perception that I only feel complete when I am in the company of other people. I grew up witnessing his herculean efforts to support my sick grandparents while giving my brothers and me a comfortable life and every opportunity to enjoy education. When I was 8, I realized that my uncle Ezequiel was different. He was in his early twenties, but his behavior was similar to that of younger friends of mine. At age 10, I finally learned about Down syndrome. My father, as the oldest child, decided to take care of my grandmother right after her husband died. I was not yet born when he brought grandma and uncle Ezequiel home. I admire the sacrifices that this man has made in order to offer everyone in the family opportunities that he could not himself enjoy. I grew up determined to pay him back for all he's done for us. My father's behavior as a family leader inspired me to care about others and to bring everyone together, not leaving anyone behind. Sacrificing his own self, my father sought to enable people to reach what he never even dreamed of. I acknowledge his effort and devotion and I will focus on rewarding him for so much he has done for us. Following my role model, I stick to the principle that no one should be left behind and tried to go out of my way to help people around me. They, in exchange, recognize me as a committed and dependable individual.

"Inter hominem esse" is what really matters to me.

### Essay 2: Why Stanford?

I believe that the most important quality in a businessperson is her ability to gather people around an ambitious project, acknowledge their contribution, and reward their efforts. I believe in my potential for doing so, but I still have a lot to learn at Stanford.

You don't need to be the most intelligent, devoted, or strategic person, but you can put together the brightest guy, the most determined girl, the best Napoleon around, and the high-achieved jack-of-all-trades. Early on, I understood that my actions would reverberate, affecting others around me. Later, as I left home for college, my choices were clearly oriented by my need to grow within a group that shares values. The need to belong to a group filled my 4-year college experience. In my ambition to make my family proud, I would attend a top university far from home. I soon formed a new family at Unicamp, top-tier Brazilian university, as I saw professors as parents and classmates as siblings. Besides excelling academically, I committed to the community: choir, volunteer activities in asylums, student representative, and goalkeeper in handball. I became an example to others. Unlike most classmates, who could easily afford tuition, I attended Unicamp on a scholarship from Fundacao Estudar, cofounded by Jorge Paulo Lemann. I



