

Unique Thread and Three Circles of Impact

A worksheet for finding patterns in your experience and deciding where to go deeper.

Begin with what you actually notice

Your Unique Thread is a two- or three-sentence thesis that connects your experiences and explains the distinctive contribution you bring. It develops from what you already care about and do. You do not need to make every activity fit the same theme.

For a few weeks, spend two minutes twice a day recording one observation, interest, choice, responsibility, or small moment. Add why it stayed with you. Use this page repeatedly; complete the later pages after patterns begin to emerge.

Name _____ Dates _____

Entry 1

What happened or caught my attention

Why I recorded it and what it reveals about me

Entry 2

What happened or caught my attention

Why I recorded it and what it reveals about me

Entry 3

What happened or caught my attention

Why I recorded it and what it reveals about me

Writing in Word: type on the blank lines or replace them with your response. Print extra copies of this page for more entries.

Find a thread in the evidence

Read several weeks of notes together. Look for a recurring question, habit, tension, or way of contributing. “I am hardworking” is a starting label; the details need to show how your work differs from someone else’s.

Two or three patterns I notice across my entries

Two specific experiences that support the strongest pattern

What I contribute and how someone else could recognize it

My current Unique Thread in two or three sentences

Test it before using it

- ☐ Each claim points to something I have actually done, noticed, or learned.
- ☐ The language is specific enough that it would not describe most of my classmates.
- ☐ I have not forced unrelated interests into the same explanation.
- ☐ The thread leaves room for uncertainty, growth, and more than one side of me.

Use the thread to guide choices about activities and essays. It is working material, not a slogan that needs to appear in every response.

Plan depth through the Three Circles

Choose one interest worth pursuing more seriously. The circles describe increasing ownership and reach, not a checklist every student or activity must complete. Useful work at a local scale matters on its own.

Activity or interest and the people it serves

Circle 1 Learn and contribute in an existing activity

Develop skills, understand the organization, take responsibility, and contribute reliably. What can you already do, and what do you still need to learn?

Circle 2 Apply those skills independently in your community

What actual need could you address beyond the original activity? Who should help define that need? Describe one small action you could test and how you would tell whether it helped.

Circle 3 Build sustainable impact at a broader scale

Summit's published framework describes sustainable state or national reach. If local work proves useful, what training, partners, handoff, or resources would let it continue elsewhere? Leave this open if expansion would not serve the work.

One next step I can take, the person I need to involve, and a review date

Worked example

Imagine a student who enjoys sound design and volunteers with a community theater. These details illustrate the exercise; they do not describe a Summit student.

From notes to a Unique Thread

An early note: “During rehearsal, a new crew member could follow my equipment checklist but could not tell which sound to adjust. I realized I had written instructions around what I already knew.”

Why it stayed with the student: “I like solving technical problems, but I become more interested when I have to explain how I knew which problem to solve. Asking someone to show me where they got stuck is more useful than repeating my instructions.”

A second note describes helping a younger sibling edit a recording. The student begins to notice the same habit: making tacit technical knowledge easier for another person to use.

Possible Unique Thread

“I enjoy figuring out where technical instructions stop being useful to a beginner. In theater sound work and the recording projects I do with my sibling, I test explanations by watching someone use them, then revise around what they actually need.”

This thread names a pattern and supports it with experiences. It does not claim to be a professional sound engineer, an organization founder, or an expert teacher.

An honest plan for the circles

Circle 1: Learn the theater’s equipment and safety procedures, run cues reliably, and ask an experienced volunteer to check the student’s understanding.

Circle 2: With permission from the community center, work with its youth theater volunteers on a short equipment guide. Watch two beginners try it, record where they hesitate, and revise. Success means they can carry out the agreed tasks safely and explain what to do when something goes wrong.

Circle 3: A future possibility, not a current accomplishment. If the guide proves useful locally, ask a regional or state theater network whether other groups need it. Wider use would require permission, equipment-specific adaptations, a responsible maintainer, and feedback from the groups using it.

The next step

Ask the theater supervisor which tasks a beginner may safely learn and arrange one supervised trial. The student should report the work that happened, not the scale they hope to reach.

More about the approach

What Top Colleges Are Actually Looking For

<https://summittutors.org/what-top-colleges-are-actually-looking-for/>

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