

THE COLLEGE ESSAY

College admission officers are aware of how many questions you have about the role and the purpose of the essay. Common questions you may have are:

How much does it count?

What should I write about?

How do I know if an experience I have had is “significant” or not?

Your college essay provides a wonderful opportunity to share your thoughts with the college admission officers and let them see another side of you. Your essay makes you more than just a name, a transcript, a GPA, a test score and a list of activities. The essay provides the college admission officer another way in which to evaluate your character, creativity, power of persuasion, depth of knowledge and style and mastery of standard written English.

The essay question may be direct and ask you to choose something about yourself to discuss or it may be indirect and require you to write something about an event, a book, a quotation or a person who has influenced your life.

So, how do you get started?

Think about your topic. There is no right or wrong answer. Be sincere and tasteful. Keep in mind that not everyone’s sense of humor is the same. Be sensitive as to how your reader may interpret what you write.

Think about yourself. What are your strengths? How have you overcome obstacles? What is your passion? What is your reaction to setbacks? Rather than describing an event or a position you’ve held, comment on your feelings, reactions and insights you learned from the experience.

Beginning the process. Once you have decided on a topic, your next step is to organize your thoughts so that the writing of your essay is easier. Use a method that works best for you which you learned in your English classes. Whether it's the visual and graphic organizing method , brainstorming, outlining or any combination of methods, don't just start writing your essay without this step.

Write your first draft. Then put it aside for a while perhaps even a day or two.

The interval will make it easier to catch mistakes or awkward writing before writing your second draft. It is also a good idea to have someone who knows you proofread your essay to give you feedback and make suggestions as well as find any spelling or grammatical errors.

Keep your focus narrow and personal. The reader must be able to easily find your topic and follow it throughout the essay. Read your opening to someone and ask that person what your topic is.

Be specific. Avoid generalities and clichés.

Answer the question. Be sure you understand the question to which you are to respond. If you have choices, consider each one. The one you may have wanted to eliminate at first may be the exact question you ended up using for the basis of your essay.

Be yourself. Don't write about what you *think* it is colleges want to read. Be personal, refreshing, genuine and new. Remember admission officers read numerous essays. Something that may seem unique to you may be shared by many other high school seniors. Come up with an idea that is yours alone.

Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!

Careless mistakes make you look like you do not care about getting into college. This is not the impression you want to leave with the individual who is reading your essay. Check your spelling and your grammar. Don't rely on spelling and grammar check program in your word processor as certain words may be missed such as "form" when you really meant "from".

Make sure your word choice represents words that you know and use. Do not fill Your essay with words you found in thesaurus that you do not know.

Be genuine in your writing.

Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help. Your English teacher, your Counselor, the resource center and other sources of help are available to you.

Remember. This essay is about you. You want to convince the college of your choice to admit you into their student body. This is your chance to shine!

The Personal Statement. Some colleges ask that you write a personal statement instead of or in addition to the college essay. The same rules above apply. The difference between the personal statement and the essay is the personal statement is a narrative about you. YOU are the topic. Self-expression of who you are and who you want to become is usually the focus of a personal statement.

Below are some types of questions you may find on college applications:

Why did you choose us?

What are your career goals and how can we meet them?

How would you describe yourself as a human being?

Why do you think you would be a good fit at our school?

What person in your life has had the most impact on you?

If you can spend a day with someone, living or dead, who would it be and why?

What is the best advice you have ever received and why?

How would your friends describe you?

Create your own question and answer it

Good luck to you all!