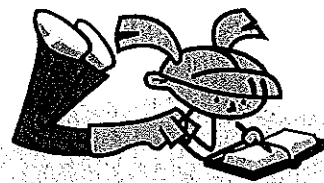


INFO FOR STUDENTS!

The "Write" Stuff—How to Develop Your Best College Essay and Why It is Important



Essay Anxiety

Why is the essay so important??

- If a college is asking for an essay, not only are they going to read it, many colleges tell us they read it **FIRST** when reviewing applications!
- Gives an immediate impression of who the student is and what he or she is about
- **IT CAN OFTEN BE THE THING THAT SETS THE STUDENT APART IN HIS/HER APPLICATION.**

If it is so important, why do students avoid writing a draft??

- No matter how talented the writer, it's easy to doubt your writing skills.
- IT ASKS YOU TO DO WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN TOLD NOT TO—talk about and focus on yourself ☺**

[Writing the essay] is no easy feat since peer pressure to conform usually causes us to hide our true selves. After spending your whole life avoiding the description "weird," you must now think about all the characteristics that differentiate you from your friends, characteristics that make you unique, human." Dr. G. Gary Ripple, Do It Write

And then you have to write about them!! ☺

Some great tips from the college side about the essay. . .

- ✓ **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE!**
 - The essay is a clear view of you and your personality to the admissions staff.
 - What do you want us to know and remember about you?????
 - What makes you *different* from all of those other qualified applicants we must consider?
- ✓ **When we say the "most significant" experience that has happened to you, we are being somewhat deceitful. ☺**
 - **We really mean the "most significant" thing that isn't happening to everyone else!**
- ✓ Your college essay is not an academic piece of writing like you would turn in to English class; rather it is a glimpse in to your personal journal.
- ✓ Keep the essay narrow in focus and personal
 - Not about what you've done, but who you are

- Doing this tells a lot about who you are as a student—ability to analyze, focus, communicate, etc.
- ✓ Don't write a resume
 - Don't include things that can be found elsewhere in application
- ✓ Don't tell us what you think we want to hear
 - It is OK to write about something controversial.
 - Bring something new to the table
 - Students who focus on whether or not it is the "right" message tend to struggle much more with the process!

So how can I work on developing my ideas?

See green handout for a great way to brainstorm!!

How to put my best foot forward?? REVISE AND EDIT!!

- ✓ For revising tools, see the peer review sheet!
 - This isn't a "school" essay but the skills that you have developed in revising will sure come in handy. This is a tool to utilize it if it will help you
- ✓ Some important editing tips!!
 - TYPE!!!
 - Double space
 - Don't be afraid to stand out! Use quotations, vivid and specific facts.
 - Use humor with care.
 - Ask someone else to proofread it.
 - Prepare the essay before sitting down to complete an on-line application.
 - We try to extol the virtues of the "copy and paste" functions ☺
 - Use simple, clear and direct language.



COLLEGE ESSAY PEER REVIEW QUESTIONS AND CHECKLIST

Answer the following questions about the essay you read,

- The college essay is not an academic piece of writing like you would turn in to English class; rather it is a glimpse in to your personal journal. *Which do you feel like you just read? Why?*

- The essay should be narrow in focus and personal—not about what you’ve done, but who you are. *Does that describe this essay? Why or why not?*

- Don’t re-write your resume. Your essay should not include things that can be found elsewhere in application. It should bring a new aspect and personality to your college application. *Did you discover a new aspect of the writer? What is it?*

over for essay checklist

COLLEGE ESSAY RUBRIC

Name: _____

Title: _____

Criteria	Strength	Weakness	Comments
Appropriate details in opening (strong lead or image that grabs reader's attention)			
Deliberate placement of thesis expresses the writer's overall intent in the essay			
Distinct voice and tone; maintains appropriate point of view (1 st)			
Organizes ideas logically or creatively with smooth transitions between ideas			
Story snippets deliberately support thesis			
Development of ideas demonstrates elaboration, creativity and reflection			
Obvious control of narrative's plot			
Conclusion brings ideas together meaningfully			
Sentences demonstrate a variety of structure and length; effective construction			
Effective word choice and usage			

TIPS FOR COLLEGE ESSAYS FROM THE PROS

(Compiled from comments of college counselors from all over the world)

- The student should write about something he/she cares about.
- Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!
- It can be about the most mundane subject, but I want to see your reflection in the essay.
- If you are writing about an influential person, use the essay as an opportunity to see your personality reflected through the prism of that person. Why are you different than you would have been if you hadn't known the person?
- Tell about yourself through a story/anecdote.
- Allow plenty of time to write a first draft, proof multiple times for edits, and finalize essay (don't even THINK about waiting until the night before the deadline)
- Don't write on a topic that "sounds" impressive.
- Write in a style that reflects who you are.
- Don't write about your summer trip to Israel or any event that you know that 5 of your friends could write about.
- Make sure that the essay could only be written by you. You must present a personal perspective that allows colleges to view an aspect of you that is not reflected elsewhere in your application.
- The opening sentence needs to "grab" the reader. An imaginative opening will get their attention.
- Be sure to focus on the "why" of an experience, not the "what."
- Those essays that reveal an intellectual epiphany are rare – but impressive. For those who find their intellectual passion while in high school and somehow tie it to their collegiate goals, that'll impress any sound admissions counselor.
(Brown)
- Above all, be yourself.
- Good writing is lean, progressive, imaginative, grounded in specifics, energized by apt verbs, and respectful of the reader's intelligence.
- Do go for depth rather than breadth, answer the question, write about something you care about, use the essay to explain a problem, illustrate and interest, be sincere, be interesting, proofread.
- DON'T write a glorified list or a travelogue or blame others for your situation.
- Focus on a specific idea, not a generality (like taking a picture and focusing on one specific part of the picture)
- Be clear, concise, insightful.
- Own it. 2. Keep it short. 3. Make one point well. 4. Do not use a thesaurus. 5. Like it.
- Share the essay with someone, preferably an English teacher, to catch the minor syntax things you don't catch because you know what you meant to say.
- Be yourself, write your own essay, use your own voice and have a little fun with it. It is not a book report. Remember, someone is going to be reading yours, alongside 80 – 100 other essays that day and the same for the next 12 weeks.