

TIPS FOR WRITING THE COLLEGE ADMISSION ESSAY

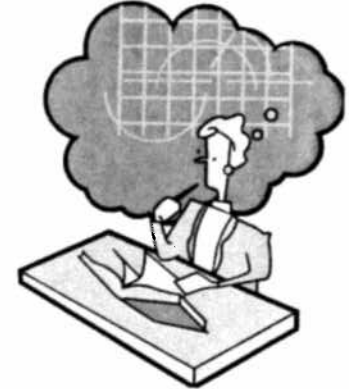
Read the Directions

Content

- Assigned topic or free choice
- Think about WHY that content is being requested
- Think about your audience when choosing your writing style

Format

- Length- Minimum, maximum? Required, recommended?
- Formal or informal
- Free-form typing vs copy/paste



Choose a Topic that Reflects YOU

What makes you unique?

- What are your special skills/talents/hobbies?
- In what area of study are you interested and why?
- What compelling experiences have you had (travel, leadership, service, work)? And more importantly, what have you learned from them?
- How have you overcome any disabilities, obstacles, challenges?
- How have you been affected by something you studied, read, or experienced?
- How has a special person influenced your life?
- What can you contribute to campus?

Is there something in your application that needs explanation?

The essay can be a good place to explain discrepancies in your academic history (one poor semester, low test scores, etc.). Remember: explanation, not excuses. Use it as a way of helping the admissions committee better understand your academic history.

Stuck finding a topic?

- Use friends, family albums, yearbooks, journals, etc., to help you recall events
- Respond to a "hot topic" in the media *that has meaning for you*
- Create an acrostic using your name
- Pretend you're being interviewed – talk about yourself and have someone take notes
- Just start writing anything relevant to your college essay; once you are writing fluently, you can choose a focus and revise/rewrite
- Write a letter to a friend or family member

Choose a Focus, Central Idea, or Story

(But use it as a tool to demonstrate reflection & thought.)

- Share HOW you have grown or changed as a result of the event, experience, obstacle, etc.
- Demonstrate WHY the topic is meaningful to you and relevant to your college plans
- Avoid the "Laundry List" with activities and titles and no substance

Be Creative, Imaginative, Funny, or Entertaining IF that's Your Style

Organize Your Essay Logically

Introduction

- Grab the reader's interest early on.
- Use a "vehicle" to describe yourself.
- Humor is okay -- but keep your audience in mind.
- Introduce the topics to be discussed in the body.



Body

- Paragraphs should be clearly and logically organized to support central idea.
- Be specific, concrete, and analytical. Keep sentences short and clear.
- Don't just provide a laundry list of activities. Pick one and describe what it meant to you, what you learned, how you changed.
- Go for depth, not breadth. Quality, not quantity.

Conclusion

- Summarize
- Offer some "lessons learned."
- Discuss how the experience prepared you for college.

Proofread Your Essay

- Have someone whose judgment you trust look over your essay. (Ask a counselor, teacher, parent, friend, sibling, "Does this give an accurate picture of me?")
- There should be NO errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or word usage.
- Never have someone else write it for you!

Be Honest & Real

- Write it yourself.
- Write about who you are.
- Establish your own voice. Don't be stiff.
- Don't use unnatural words.
- Don't be shy, but don't be too arrogant.

Save a Copy of Your Essay

