



## Getting Personal

As seniors narrow down their lists of colleges and universities, college admission deadlines are quickly approaching. In addition to meeting deadlines, careful preparation of required documents is very important. Many colleges will require an official copy of the high school transcript, SAT scores, letters of recommendation, a personal essay and even a personal interview. Many students fear submitting standardized test scores but students should realize that college admissions officers don't admit numbers – they admit students. Colleges consider your admissibility based on many factors, not just your SAT scores. Colleges evaluate all of the components of your application. Admission officers look for students who they feel will add something special to their campus environment. They want students who are willing to get involved and be active in the campus community through academics, athletics, student activities and leadership groups.

**Be sure to portray yourself positively in your application and essay and emphasize the listed characteristics:**

### In a Student:

Originality  
Character  
Self-motivation  
Creativity  
Sense of Purpose

### In an Application:

Organization  
Consistency  
Honesty  
Clarity  
Brevity

Academic performance, as revealed in your high school transcript, is the most crucial component of your college application. However, colleges are looking for a well-rounded student. By evaluating the test scores, recommendations, resume, essay and, possibly, an interview, the counselors will have a better assessment of the student's overall make up. The goal of the essay is to provide insight about the student's character that cannot be gained from the GPA, class rank and test scores alone. Regardless of the topic, the essay should provide insight on the student's personality, creativity, experience, values, and ability to think critically. The essay should be an example of your best professional writing.

Think of the essay as the soul of your application. An application without an essay is a statistic -- just another faceless person in the crowd. An application with a poorly written essay does not give admissions officers the opportunity to get to know and understand you. It is simple psychology: the better they know you, the more difficult it will be to reject you. Help them know you, like you, and see your potential and they might accept you despite your weakness in other areas.

## Center for College Planning at the NHHEAF Network Organizations

The Center for College Planning at the **NHHEAF Network Organizations** is dedicated to providing students and families with valuable information about the college planning process—from savings options and college admissions requirements, to applying for financial aid and scholarships. We serve all student populations: traditional, continuing education, graduate and adult learner. We offer college planning materials and coordinate speakers for schools, businesses and community organizations free of charge. We provide dynamic small group workshops in our Concord, New Hampshire office. We also provide a toll free college planning hotline and comprehensive Web site. Our goal is to promote higher education as the means to achieving personal, career and life goals.

## The NHHEAF Network Organizations

The **NHHEAF Network Organizations** are comprised of four independent nonprofit organizations dedicated to streamlining the student loan process:

**New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation (NHHEAF)** guarantees, originates and disburses your loan.

**New Hampshire Higher Education Loan Corporation (NHHELCO)** funds your loan.

**Granite State Management & Resources (GSM&R)** services your loan.

**NHHEAF Network Educational Foundation (NNEF)** administers charitable giving.



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This product has been granted the Seal of Approval from the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

# Tips for Writing the College Essay

Click here to link to Webbing Strategies for the College Essay!

College Essay  
**FYI: Most colleges request the essay to be 250-500 words. This equals approximately 1½ or 2 pages double-spaced.**

## 1

### Step One: Choosing a Topic

Often colleges give students options for writing the essay. We've seen questions ranging from "Who is your hero?" and "Where do you see yourself in five years?" to "What issues would you tackle if you were President of the United States?" and "If given the opportunity, what historical figure would you choose to have dinner with?" The trick is to find one topic that you can write about most passionately and effectively. Often you'll have an option to write on a topic of your choice.

It is worth devoting energy, time and thought to crafting your essay. In many cases, you can save time by submitting the same essay to various schools.

### Can I apply online?

Yes, applying online saves time and paper. Admission counselors expect the same accuracy and commitment to grammar as they would if you mailed it in.

## 3

### Step Three: Writing Style

**You do not need long, complicated sentences** to show that you are a good writer. Short sentences often pack the most punch.

**Don't answer the question in the first sentence.** Leave a little mystery to what the rest of the essay will be about.

**Show, Don't Tell:** Rather than listing a series of statements that "tell" the reader, find ways to "show" them, again through stories, images and examples.

**Forget the Thesaurus:** Big words do NOT make a good essay. Writing simple isn't stupid.

**The conclusion** is your last chance to persuade the reader and impress upon them your qualifications. End on a positive note.

## 2

### Step Two: Tackling the Questions

Once you've identified a topic, you must now confront the underlying problem of the admissions essay: synthesizing your important personal characteristics and experiences while simultaneously addressing your desire to attend a specific institution.

**Here are a few ways to get started:**

**Answer the question.** If you haven't addressed the topic or answered the essay question, you've missed the point. (And, you've proven that you don't follow directions well!)

• **Keep your reader in mind.** Often your essay, your entire application for that matter, will be read by multiple people in the Admissions Office. Remember that they may be reading hundreds, even thousands, of applications. You want to intrigue your reader and keep their interest throughout the essay. You are not writing a research paper; look at it more as telling a story.

**Brainstorm!** Jot down ideas related to the topic. Write without regard to grammar or mechanics. This kind of informal writing may help you clarify the best way to approach the topic.

### Step Four: Editing and Revising

## 4

**PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD!**

Writing is a process. Once you have completed the first draft, take a break. You will have more insight if you come back to the essay with a fresh perspective.

Come to the CCP library in Concord November 25<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-6:00 p.m. for the "Write Stuff" workshop for practical tips for essay writing and Common Application questions.

**PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD!**

## College Application Essay Help

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)  
[www.statementofpurpose.com](http://www.statementofpurpose.com)  
[www.admissionsessays.com](http://www.admissionsessays.com)  
[collegeplanning@nhheaf.org](mailto:collegeplanning@nhheaf.org)

## News Around the Nation:

### NH Grads & Debt

According to the third annual report released by The Project on Student Debt ([projectonstudentdebt.org](http://projectonstudentdebt.org)) college graduates from 2007 carried 6% more debt than graduates in 2006.

The report also stated that New Hampshire college students carried the second highest student loan debt in the country averaging around \$25,000 upon graduation. But, the news is not all bleak. In fact, a new grant for teachers, the TEACH (Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education) Grant Program will be available as of the 2008-09 school year. The Academic Competitiveness Grant and the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grant (National SMART Grant) are another source of funding through the federal government.

The Department of Education's Federal student aid programs are the largest source of student aid in America. These programs provide more than \$80 billion a year in grants, loans, and work-study assistance. Financial assistance is definitely still out there to make college aspirations a reality.

## Did You Know?

### Campus Spotlight

As you grind through the college application process this fall, remember that each college has unique methods for evaluating candidates. Some colleges may not require SAT's (visit [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org) for the full listing). Other colleges may require the SAT, but may not be evaluating your essay section of the test. Most colleges will require recommendations and essays, and while it is helpful to have others proofread your essay before submitting, some student's biggest challenge is simply getting started.

Wouldn't it be helpful if every college offered some samples of what a good college essay looked like? Well, Connecticut College does just that. On the link provided, they share essays from students who have been accepted and are now matriculated at their school. Remember that Connecticut College is a selective institution located in New London, Connecticut. And while these essay styles may not be appropriate for every college, at least you can get a glimpse at what some students have submitted. <http://www.conncoll.edu/admissions/essays/index.html>

### Interested in \$1,000?

If you answered yes, then the Destination College<sup>SM</sup> Speech Contest may be your ticket. The Center for College Planning is looking for seniors to write a ten minute speech regarding their experiences with college planning. The first place winner will be awarded \$1,000, address participants at Destination College<sup>SM</sup> as the keynote speaker and have their speech published in the 2009-2010 *New Hampshire Next* magazine. The deadline is February 8, 2009. For more information about the contest, visit [www.destinationcollege.org](http://www.destinationcollege.org).

## Scholarship Alert

For the third year in a row, the Patriots Charitable Foundation and Fidelity investments will give away thousands of dollars in scholarship money to local students. The Inspire the Future "Write On" contest asks students to write a 500-750 word recap about the Patriot's most recent game. The prizes are awarded after every four game stretch. Winners can receive up to \$20,000 in scholarship money. Visit [totallypatriots.com](http://totallypatriots.com) for more details.

## Joe College Blog



Worried about that college interview you have coming up? Stressed about what you'll be asked and how you'll answer? Visit the Ask Joe College blog at <http://joecollegeblog.com> to ask questions, post comments and find answers to all your questions regarding college applications, college planning and funding and campus life. Ask Joe offers answers to common, and not so common, questions that seniors have about college. Your questions will be answered by expert college counselors from the Center for College Planning. What are you waiting for? **Ask Joe College now!**

## Upcoming:

Upcoming: December – “Show Me The Money” - Applying for financial aid and scholarships

**Your next Dean’s List will be sent in December. We will begin to discuss the financial aid application process. Meanwhile, continue to work on your college essay drafts. Remind those individuals writing letters of recommendations that deadlines are fast approaching.**

*The NHHEAF Network Organizations are comprised of four 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that provide students and families with the resources and funding to pursue higher education aspirations. Funds generated by the Organizations make their charitable mission possible as student loan earnings are reinvested in programs and services that benefit citizens of New Hampshire. For more information, visit [www.nhheaf.org](http://www.nhheaf.org).*