



TIPS FOR WRITING THE COLLEGE ESSAY

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WHY A COLLEGE ESSAY?



THE COLLEGE ESSAY. . .

- Shares information not yet featured in your application
- Adds detail or context to achievements
- Connects the dots for admission officers
- Personalizes the admission application

The essay can also stop the college application process in its tracks!



ESSAY TOPICS



CHOOSING AN ESSAY TOPIC

- Don't write what you think the admissions office wants to hear
- Prioritize experiences over goals



- **FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT!**
 - Think about what you would tell a new friend or professor if they asked you to share something about yourself – is the topic you chose what you would want to tell them?



CHOOSING AN ESSAY TOPIC

- If you're not excited and/or passionate about your topic, the reader won't be either
- There are *almost* no forbidden topics – but use caution with sensitive or overused subjects
 - Illegal behaviors or activities - ALWAYS a bad idea
 - Challenging personal situations (illness, family crisis, mental health, trauma)
 - Service/mission trip to another country or “the big game” – VERY common





COMMON APP ESSAY PROMPTS

Reflect on a time when **you** questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted **your** thinking? What was the outcome?

Share an essay on any topic of **your** choice. It can be one **you've** already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of **your** own design.

*Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like **you**, then please share **your** story.*

Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of **yourself** or others.

The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when **you** faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect **you**, and what did **you** learn from the experience?

Describe a problem **you've** solved or a problem **you'd** like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to **you** and what steps **you** took or could be taken to identify a solution.

Describe a topic, idea, or concept **you** find so engaging that it makes **you** lose all track of time. Why does it captivate **you**? What or who do **you** turn to when **you** want to learn more?



COMMON APP ESSAY PROMPTS

- What do these prompts all have in common?

**IT'S ALL
ABOUT
YOU!**

- Use an experience, another person, or a favorite activity as a springboard, but **YOU** are the star of **YOUR** essay



WRITING THE ESSAY



DON'T JUST REPORT – REFLECT!

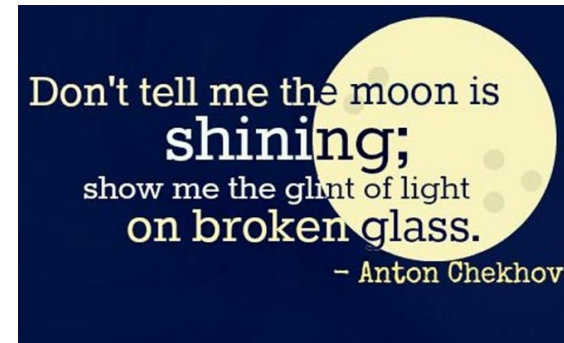
- Tell your story **AND** think critically
- Ask yourself, “**WHY?**”, so your reader doesn’t have to ask, “**SO WHAT?**”





IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

- Use anecdotes, examples, and descriptions
- Share interesting details



One time at summer camp, my friend and I heard something moving in the woods at night and we were scared.

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R

I bit my lip and my mouth filled with the sweet, coppery taste of blood as she leaned in closely toward me, breathing her hot breath on the damp hair at the base of my neck.

- Avoid plainly stating the purpose of your essay – it's far less effective when you spell it out



AVOID AI

- **Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT) is a chatbot used to write essays**
- **Why not use ChatGPT?**
 - **Unethical**
 - **Not about the ability to write but rather the ability to think, express, be vulnerable**
 - **Great personal essays are clever and insightful with an authenticity and sincerity that can only come from the person writing them**

Given two ChatGPT-produced essays, admissions officer says...

- *Neither raised red flags as being AI-generated*
- *Neither answered the prompt in a convincing way*
- *Both were cliché*
- *Neither sounded sound like something a teenager would write without adult help*



TIPS



FINAL TIPS



- **Write like you speak**
 - Try using your phone to voice record your ideas about your essay so you can capture those words and phrases
- **Steer clear of the thesaurus**
- **Start early**
- **Don't be afraid to start over**
- **Ask no more than 2 people to read your essay and offer feedback**
- **Proofread, then proofread again**



IS IT TIME TO HIT *SEND*?

- Did you answer the question?
- Do you feel like you have clearly conveyed who you are?
- Did you check your tone?
- Is your essay grammatically correct?
- Is your last draft significantly better than your first?
- Do you know you've shared something about yourself you want your reader to know that is no where else on your application?
- Is it authentic and reflective?
- Did you follow instructions and do a word count?



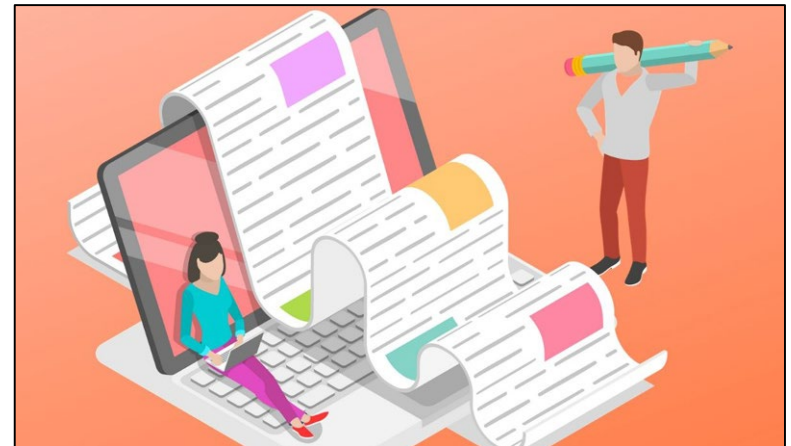
FINAL ADVICE

What is the biggest tip you can give students about writing their essays?



NHHEAF SUMMER ESSAY WORKSHOPS

- We offer NUMEROUS College Essay Prep sessions during the summer!
 - In-Person and virtual options
 - Morning and afternoon sessions available
 - Registration opens in May



**Check the NHHEAF
Website for more
information!**



QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU!

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Schedule an appointment online:

[Calendly.com/nhheaf_ccp](https://calendly.com/nhheaf_ccp)



Book an appointment