

## COLLEGE ADMISSION ESSAY

Essays are and will continue to be an essential ingredient in the college admission process for the more selective colleges; they should always be treated with respect by the applicant. If a student is borderline, essays can truly make the difference.

I am constantly reminded of the importance of the college admission essay, most recently by a student of mediocre academic standing who was accepted by all four of her long-shot institutions. Given her academic record, it was fairly obvious that the essay indeed made the difference. After all, it was a spectacular example of a college admission essay.

What usually trips up most students is not their writing ability, but time. Most students put off the writing of an essay because for them it is an unpleasant chore. So needless to say, they feel rushed when they do sit down to complete it and the finished product is usually less than spectacular. It is for this reason, that many counselors suggest to students that they start the essay in the summer months when there is less academic and social interference. This can be accomplished by reviewing college applications currently available or by remembering that there are usually two basic types of college admission topics: one is an essay written in response to a specific question (Describe a significant experience and its impact on your life) and the other is an essay written as a personal statement (Choose a topic to write about). Additional essay topics can be found at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).

It is recommended that you choose one of the following topics when given the option:

Describe a significant experience and its impact on your life.

or

Choose a topic to write about.

Once you have established the topic, it is very important to remember not to stray. You have to answer the question. If a box is provided, do not exceed the imposed limits; you may wish to make copies of the box and practice first before you insert your final draft. Remember, above all, it is always important to strive to demonstrate creativity and fine writing.

Sometimes it's not easy to find an essay topic; so consider the following suggestion: always take time to brainstorm your topics by doing a historical review of your life before beginning. To begin, find a comfortable and quiet place. Next, try to think back as far as you can and then begin listing all the significant events that you can recall. Please remember, however, that these events need not be significant to anyone else but

you. This little drill should only take about 10 minutes. Once you have accomplished this task, choose three options and write outlines for each. Utilize the topic with the best outline. Additional insight can be obtained by reviewing: *Admit One* by Gary Ripple, *Essays that Worked* by Curry and Kasbar, *The Admissions Essay* by Power and DiAntonio, *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White, *50 Successful Harvard Application Essays: With Analysis by the Staff of the Harvard Crimson* by Harvard Crimson, *On Writing the College Application Essay* by Harry Bauld, *100 Successful College Application Essays* by Christopher J. Georges, *How to Write a Winning College Application Essay* by Michael James Mason and *Essays That Will Get You into College* by Amy Burnham.

### **First Steps**

- You should always begin by writing an outline.
- Start your essay by preparing a rough draft and then let it sit for a couple of days.
- Rewrite your draft, if necessary.
- Have a friend, your English teacher and your college counselor review it.
- Revise and type your final copy; the average essay is 1 ½ to 2 pages in length or 250-500 words.

### **Always Remember**

- Start early!
- Read any and all directions carefully.
- Try to demonstrate at least one personal characteristic (e.g. determination, intellectual curiosity, warmth, etc.), if possible.
- Attempt to elicit some type of emotion from the reader.
- Write about something you know and enjoy.
- Write the essay as if you had to read it.
- Open with a power statement, a sentence that immediately attracts the reader's attention.
- Continuity is important. Avoid being too cryptic. The essay should flow smoothly throughout. If the reader has to stop to question anything, you have lost your opportunity.
- Close with a power statement, a sentence that reflects personal insight.
- Consider the institution (i.e. is it liberal or conservative by nature, etc.?).
- Stay positive.
- Make several copies.
- Answer the question.
- Try to be original.
- Make sure it flows.
- Make sure that it doesn't exceed the recommended size.
- Put your name and social security number on each page.

- Proofread it several times.

### **Avoid**

- Redundancy.
- Cryptic comparisons.
- Forcing it.
- Trying to be funny, when you're not.
- Quoting overused sources, poets and authors.

### **Risky Topics** (topics that have been overdone)

- What I learned in sports.
- My study abroad experience.
- The President of the United States.
- Current, political or religious issues.