

NORTH SHORE

Writing the college essay

How to make your essay stand out from the rest

Applying to college requires time, effort and money. Filling out applications, whether traditionally or on-line, is time consuming. Answering the many questions drains energy. On top of that, each application a student submits costs a pretty penny — usually around \$50.

In addition to this process, students need to write an essay. Depending upon the school, the numbers of essays required vary, but students can count on having to write at least one. If they're lucky, different colleges will ask the same, if not similar questions, reducing the time and effort factor.

Why do high school seniors have to write an admissions essay when they're submitting test scores, transcripts, community service and extra-curricular descriptions? College admissions people want to see that each student is more than a set of numbers and letters. The essay allows students to show their true selves and ability to communicate in writing.

There are numerous topics and questions offered on college applications. Basically, each one asks for an experience that has made the student who they are today. Students are asked to evaluate significant experiences, risks taken and ethical dilemmas faced. They can indicate a person who provides positive influences. Descriptions of characters, historical figures or creative works are also available for discussion. Most importantly, the impact of the student's experience with these options is what catches the reader's interest.

Choosing an appropriate topic is the toughest aspect of this task. Students should consider what do they have to say about themselves that makes them different from everyone else? Remember that the college admission people read thousands of essays, so what is written should be of importance and interest. When students find roadblocks in choosing a subject, brainstorming is very helpful.

Considerable time needs to be devoted to the creation of this essay. This writing assignment isn't one of those you can knock out in one sitting. Multiple drafts and revising must occur in order to end up with a solid essay.

Several tips on writing the admissions essay are offered from Tips by EssayEdge.com.

- ◆ Answer the question. Make sure that the essay discusses what is being asked.
- ◆ Start with a creative lead.

By Vicki Isacowitz



ON THE CHALKBOARD

Be original. Avoid beginning the essay with "The following experience explains and/or illustrates why I want to be accepted to this college." Instead, start in the middle of the action, or use a quote.

- ◆ Use detail and concrete experiences. Be yourself.

- ◆ Be concise. Avoid wordiness. Be to the point. The people reading your essay don't want to have to figure out what you're saying. It should be clear and straightforward.

- ◆ Pay attention to transition and sentence variety. Demonstrate good usage and grammar skills.

- ◆ Use active voice verbs.

Write in the present tense, even if you're describing a situation from childhood.

- ◆ Don't thesaurize your essay. Big words are not impressive when used incor-

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rectly.

- ◆ Conclude effectively. Give the reader a sense that the essay is finished without leaving anything unanswered.

- ◆ Give your draft to others. Another set of eyes are capable of catching mistakes that are

overlooked and offering suggestions for improvement.

- ◆ Revise.

Most importantly, students need to write their own essays. It is obvious when a student submits an essay written by their parents, older siblings, a

hired tutor or one off the Internet.

Assistance with writing the college essay is available at Clever Minds. Please call (530)582-1707 for more information.