



Getting Started on your College Essay/ Personal Statement

✨ *One of the most personal components of your College Application*

The Common Application

- ★ We will create Common App account together next month
- ★ A universal college application accepted by over 1,000 colleges and universities across the country, and the world!
- ★ A comprehensive application that saves you a ton of time, because you input all information once, and then click “submit” as many times as you choose!
- ★ Most widely-used application
- ★ **Within the Common Application (or any other application,) you will find the Personal Statement/ College Essay**





Your application is **FULL** of **information about you** - your name, address, courses, activities, family, etc. but **YOUR VOICE** does not truly shine through in any of this. **The College Essay** is one of the only, sometimes THE only place, for your voice, your personality, your sense of humor, your story to shine through, while showcasing your writing strength and ability.

The College Essay is intended to be *personal...*

A personal piece; an opportunity to share with Admissions something about you or your story that they cannot see or would not learn anywhere else in your application. This is not about grades, test scores, or anything visible on the transcript.

+ Tip

Word limit: 650

650 words is NOT the goal; just the maximum. Your essay must be between 250 to 650 words.

So, think of your college
essay as you

making a first impression

to your dream college. You
are reaching out to shake
hands and introduce
yourself to the Admissions
Committee at your dream
school by sharing a little
golden nugget or a story
about **YOU...**



Many ask the million dollar question...

Does it really make a difference?!



"Of course, the transcript is the primary source of information about the applicant. But after that, when admissions counselors want a sense of the person behind the paper, when they are looking for the match between institution and applicant, essays can make the case.

[...]

"A great essay can close the deal. ... It's the one place to clearly hear the student's voice."

"The College Application Essay," College Board

Ok... Some colleges don't read the essay. Larger schools that receive thousands of applications don't have the time and do not prioritize application materials outside of GPA, course grades, and test scores. But MANY schools, including large schools, do! And they make decisions with the essay being a HUGE factor.

Colleges that want to truly know who they are accepting and accept a whole person, (not just a GPA) really value and utilize the essay.

✨ If you are on the borderline, a strong essay could get you accepted!! But a weak essay could hinder a decision.



→ Common App Writing:

“The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores? Choose the option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. Use the full range if you need it, but don't feel obligated to do so. (The application won't accept a response shorter than 250 words.)”

<https://apply.commonapp.org/common/6/33>

The prompts are vague and general - essentially, you can write about ANYTHING you want! Sometimes, this does not feel helpful because you do not feel pointed in a specific direction, but the sky's the limit for your creativity and your life experience!

Writing Prompts

- 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.
- 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?
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
- Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- 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?
- 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.

Clear answer

Do's and Don'ts...

Do:

Be personal!

- ★ A memorable moment
- ★ A turning point
- ★ An obstacle you are proud to have overcome
- ★ Something/someone that has left an impact on you
- ★ The focus stays on YOU

Be creative!

- ★ Let humor shine through (appropriately)
- ★ Profound language
- ★ Descriptive adjectives
- ★ Action words
- ★ Powerful word choices to describe emotion, passion, impact, etc.

Be passionate!

- ★ What do you want the reader to feel, experience, or take away?
- ★ Even if sharing a hardship or obstacle, the overarching message should be positive (how you conquered/ impact on you, for the better)

✨ Keep the reader's attention ✨ Be clear and concise

✨ **Quality over quantity!** Stay within the word count (250 minimum to 650 maximum)

Do's and Don'ts...

Don't:

- ★ Do not talk about grades or test scores
- ★ Do not talk about how you love to learn, in general
- ★ Do not be wordy; respect the readers' time
- ★ Do not narrate resume
- ★ **Do not use ChatGPT/AI. Be authentic!**

- ★ Do not attempt to convince the reader of a controversial topic
- ★ Do not write about an obstacle or flaw that you have not yet overcome or learned from. (Be positive about yourself!)

- ★ Do not let someone else have the last word -do not end your essay with a quotation
- ★ Ensure no grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors. Proofread & seek feedback!
- ★ Do not produce 650 words for no reason

✨ Do not list/cram every involvement/activity/accomplishment. Your essay should not be a narrative of your resume.



College Admissions Offices want to hear **your** voice. **Using AI, ChatGPT, or any AI technology** to produce an essay on your behalf, produces essays that feel robotic and not human-like. Admissions Counselors are very familiar with detecting these essays and this likely will result in a unfavorable admissions decision.

So, now is the time to get the ideas churning...

**How do I want
to introduce
myself to my
colleges?**

Your essay does **NOT** have to be a ground-breaking, open-heart-surgery-story!

Showcase an important moment-in-time in your life. Something that left an impact on you. **Something you are proud of.** An obstacle you overcame. **Something that brings you joy;** that shows your values or something you are passionate about. **A story that shows what is important to you!**

+ Tip

Memorable moments could be BIG or SMALL!

650 words is NOT the goal, but the maximum. (250 to 650 words)

Timeline of College Essay completion:

+ Tip

Spread the process throughout the summer months and fall of senior year and it will feel so manageable. **Do not procrastinate.**

- ❖ Summertime is the ideal time to brainstorm and rough draft your college essay
 - Many colleges have supplemental essays that become available August 1st
- ❖ If you are taking College English or English 12, you will write your college essay in class...but don't wait until then to start!
- ❖ August (before school begins) - attend College Essay Writing Workshop for essay feedback from a College Admissions Representative
- ❖ Begin senior year with a solid rough draft, ready to be polished. Share your draft with your Counselor and/or an English teacher(s) for feedback
- ❖ The essay is included in your Common App, so, it must be perfected and pasted into your application before you submit applications

Timeline of College Essay Completion

Summer after junior year

Brainstorm and rough draft essay idea(s); turn into rough draft

Spring-Summer 2024

Spring of Junior year

Transition focus from college research to application completion; brainstorm and draft essay topic(s)

September

Begin Senior year with a solid rough draft. Seek feedback from Counselor and/or English teacher

Polish and perfect essay

Fall 2024-2025

August

College Essay Workshop: meet with a College Admissions Rep for essay critique & feedback. Begin supplemental essays.

October-November

Early application deadlines! Paste essay into application and apply!



COMMACK
HIGH SCHOOL

COLLEGE ESSAY WRITING

VIRTUAL COLLEGE ESSAY PRESENTATION

- ✓ May 15th @ 7 pm
- ✓ Hosted by Ms. Cattarella,
Counselor
- ✓ [Click here for
the zoom link.](#)



IN-SCHOOL ESSAY WRITING WORKSHOP

HOSTED BY COLLEGE
ADMISSIONS REPRESENTATIVES

May 21st, CHS Art Gallery

Period 4 OR 5

To register:
[Fill out this form](#)



MORE INFORMATION

☎ 631-912-2121

🌐 www.commackschools.org/CounselingCenter.asp

**HOW DO I WANT TO
INTRODUCE MYSELF TO MY
PROSPECTIVE COLLEGES?**

BE **CREATIVE**, BE
PASSIONATE,
HAVE **FUN** WITH
THIS, AND LET YOUR
WRITING
STRENGTH BE
ON DISPLAY!

