



Writing Your College Essay: Getting the results you want

Presented by



What's it all about?

- You're about to write one of the most important essays of your life.
- Don't panic! The subject is one you know very well—yourself.
- You're an interesting person and it's time you show those college admissions officers just how intriguing and unique you are.

What's it all about?

- Of course, you have only a limited amount of words to do all this, which is good and bad.
- Good because you only need to write a few hundred words.
- Bad because you've got to get your point across in just those few hundred words.

Viewing your mode of attack

- It's important to view the essay as an opportunity rather than a chore.
- It's really not so hard once you know what's expected of you.
- To make an impression, your essay must stand out from the crowd and elicit an emotional response from the reader.

Write as you speak

- The purpose of the essay is to show the admissions committee the real you, why you think and act the way you do and what motivates you.
- So don't write as if you are someone else, use stilted language, or gloss over how you really feel.
- Be authentic, not superficial. Use a relaxed, conversational style (Not SLANG).

Be original

- Too many essays use the same tired themes.
- Remember that what bores you will bore others.
- As you're writing and revising, continually ask yourself if you would be interested in reading your essay.

Focus

- Rather than describing everything you've done with your life, give a full description of one or two ideas or events.
- The magic is in the details.

What a college essay is *NOT*

- Solely a sample of writing skills; although appropriate grammar, level of expressive language and spelling are expected.
- An exhaustive listing of activities, honors, awards but rather a thoughtful selection of important factors.
- An exaggeration of problems but an acceptance of responsibility for choices and behaviors.

More tips

- Vary sentence structure.
- Don't brag.
- Avoid acronyms and abbreviations.
- Be specific.
- Don't tell them what they want to hear.
- Be funny only if you can pull it off.

More tips

- Write clear and concise.
- Revise until it's what you truly want to say.
- Be aware of the word limit.
- Proofread your work.
- Show the essay to someone who can be objective, honest and trustworthy.

To get started, ask yourself the following questions...

- Why do I get up in the morning?
- When I'm alone, who am I?
- There's more to these two questions than you may realize....

Sample UCLA prompt

- **Prompt #2 (all applicants): Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are.**

Sample USC essay question

- Thomas Edison failed many times before successfully inventing the modern electric light bulb. He said, "If I find 10,000 ways something won't work, I haven't failed. I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward." Reflect on an accomplishment you achieved in an unlikely way.

Sample Stanford University Essay Question

- A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.

Sample Occidental College Essay Question

- From what ideas or pursuits do you draw inspiration; or what inspires genuine passion in your life?
- Please be specific.

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Any Questions

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