

Name:

Ms. Davis

Class & Period:

Date:

Prewriting for the College Essay

In your own words, restate and describe the college essay topic you will be writing:	
What type of essay is it? (Discover, Create, Serve, Other?)	
Do you have any limits on length? If so, what are they?	
In the column below, list some personal characteristics you would like a college admissions counselor to know about you.	For each quality you listed to the left, provide evidence from your life that shows how you display that characteristic:
If you had to pick only ONE of these qualities that you want the college to know about you, what would it be? Why?	
Finally, describe the approach you will take to write this essay. If you need help, look at the suggested approaches on the back page of the "College Essay Tips" packet. Be sure your approach fits the type of essay (from the second box above).	

From The College Board website:

Show admission officers who you are and provide information about yourself that didn't fit in other areas of your application.

Choose a Topic That Will Highlight You

Don't focus on the great aspects of a particular college, the amount of dedication it takes to be a doctor or the number of extracurricular activities you took part in during high school.

Do share your personal story and thoughts, take a creative approach and highlight areas that aren't covered in other parts of the application, like your high school records.

Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal

Don't try to cover too many topics. This will make the essay sound like a résumé that doesn't provide any details about you.

Do focus on one aspect of yourself so the readers can learn more about who you are. Remember that the readers must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. Ask a parent or teacher to read just your introduction and tell you what he or she thinks your essay is about.

Show, Don't Tell

Don't simply state a fact to get an idea across, such as "I like to surround myself with people with a variety of backgrounds and interests."

Do include specific details, examples, reasons and so on to develop your ideas. For the example above, describe a situation when you were surrounded by various types of people. What were you doing? Whom did you talk with? What did you take away from the experience?

Use Your Own Voice

Don't rely on phrases or ideas that people have used many times before. These could include statements like, "There is so much suffering in the world that I feel I have to help people." Avoid overly formal or business-like language, and don't use unnecessary words.

Do write in your own voice. For the above example, you could write about a real experience that you had and how it made you feel you had to take action. And note that admission officers will be able to tell if your essay was edited by an adult.

What did you write about?

- Emphasize: be creative and different. Too often college admissions get the same essays over and over again, so the creative ones that come by really stand out.
- Let the readers get to know you on a personal level; reveal your true self.
- My family's car accident was a painful essay to write, but I feel the judges were able to get a better view of my personality from it.
- My Common Application was about my heritage ... and favorite academic experience at Girls Nation.