

College Essay Writing Tips

Revealing The Inner You

Although the essay is probably the most dreaded part of the college application, it is also the one part where you, the applicant, can have control over the process. A well thought-out and carefully crafted essay can move you from deny to accept. The topic of the essay matters little— what's important is why you chose to write on this subject, and what the essay reveals about you.

Colleges use the long essay or personal statement, or even several shorter essay-type questions to gather information that is not supplied elsewhere in your application. Since so many students applying to a particular college have similar grades and SAT or ACT scores, and have participated in many of the same types of clubs and sports and volunteer activities, it is only through the essay that the admissions committee can learn about those qualities and experiences that separate you from the pack. Your job is to be sure that the essay does just that.

If your essay focuses on a person, activity, or experience that has had an influence on who you are, describe the subject very briefly and then focus on the importance of the subject to you. Why was "Uncle Bob" important to you? How did your association change the way you think and act? How did a particular event or activity impact your life? How are you different as a result of the experience? How do you plan to use what you've learned in the future?

Approach all essay-type questions in the same way. Even essays that ask why you are applying to that school reveal a lot about you. Your answer tells the admissions committee how well you've researched your college choices, how carefully you've considered the unique programs offered by that college, and how closely the college fits you. So use the essays to your advantage, and maximize your chances of admission.