

The College Application Essay

Soon, you will be filling out lots of college applications, and many of them will request an essay to learn more about you. While your SAT scores and GPA may open a door for you, the college essay is what can really get you invited inside the college of your choice. The college essay allows you to express who you really are beyond your statistics, and if you do not present yourself well, the college's opinion of you will be very low. So that's why your wonderful teacher is going to spend a gigantic chunk of the first six weeks helping you put together a wonderful college essay. And, of course, it's going to be a huge chunk of your grade as well.

Possible prompts –

Note: If you plan on attending college in the state of Texas, we highly recommend visiting the Texas Common Application website at www.applytexas.org. After creating an account, you will be able to access the essay prompts. Select one of these prompts to answer even if they are not required. You may change your mind later and you'll have an essay ready to go.

- Write about what is important to you and your goals, and the ways in which they are reflected in your accomplishments, challenges, or hardships.
- Many students expand their view of the world during their time in college. Such growth often results from encounters between students who have lived different cultural, economic, or academic experiences. With your future growth in mind, describe a potential classmate that you believe you could learn from either within or outside a formal classroom environment.
- Describe a significant setback, challenge or opportunity in your life and the impact that it has had on you.
- Tell about an occasion where you took a risk that you now know was the right thing to do
- Who has influenced your life the most, and how they have shaped your future?

These are all suggestions on what colleges will ask. Again, visit the Texas Common Application site to view the actual prompts. If you have the actual essay prompt from your college, you should use that as your prompt. Do some research so we can kill two birds with one stone. We hate birds, and we should kill them efficiently.

Hints –

Don't just list your achievements. That can go elsewhere. Your essay should be a story about one moment that was important to you and what your character is.

Show, don't tell. Don't say "I am a hard worker," tell how you are a hard worker. Anyone can say that they are great, but *show* how you are great.

Don't show too much! While first sexual experiences, traumatic moments, hardships, etc. may help make you who you are, they will not impress application readers. Save your intimate moments for a therapist.

Be you. While you should not use swear words and a lot of slang, you should use words that you are comfortable with. While a strong vocabulary is impressive, a student that uses a thesaurus or a dictionary while writing really stands out as “unnatural.”

If you’re going to try and be humorous, you had better be humorous. Everyone likes a funny essay, but everyone hates an essay that tries to be funny.

Write what you want to write, not what you think an admissions officer will want to read. You are expressing yourself to impress someone else.

However, remember that admissions officers will read this. You can express yourself by selectively choosing what aspects of yourself will impress someone.

Be concise. It should be no more than two pages typed, double spaced. However, it should be long enough to present yourself. Essays that are too short show that you have very little to say about yourself.

Requirements

FOR THE FIRST DAY OF THE 2009-10 SCHOOL YEAR

– You will turn in the completed College Essay Outline to show us what your essay will cover. This doesn’t need to be typed, but it does need to be legible. It does not have to be a complete outline of your final essay, but it should include your chosen prompt, a brief summary of how you will answer the prompt, three strong qualities that will be displayed, and a possible conclusion.

FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF THE 2009-10 SCHOOL YEAR

– Your first draft will be due the first Friday of the school year. **THIS MUST BE DOUBLE SPACED AND TYPED.** There will be a lot of revisions done after this.

TWO WEEKS AFTER YOUR FIRST DRAFT

– Your **DOUBLE SPACED** second draft will be due. This will have numerous corrections from the first draft and **WILL BE TYPED.** Your first draft will be turned in again at the same time.

TWO WEEKS AFTER YOUR SECOND DRAFT

– The final draft will be due. If your second draft was perfect, you will already be done. Any spelling errors or punctuation errors will result in losing major points. This final draft should be flawless and will hopefully be what you send out to colleges.

Of course your teacher wants to help, but this essay is all about you. This is your first opportunity to really impress someone with who you are, and if you take this paper lightly, it will affect your grade in a **MAJOR WAY.** This is your teacher helping you get into the college of your choice, so take advantage of the situation.

Questions? E-Mail Mr. MacGregor at mrmacg@gmail.com or Mr. Simmons at ssimmons@houstonisd.org