

# The College Essay

Why a college wants YOU at their school

# Prewriting for the College Essay:

Create a self inventory and timeline for your high school years.

- *How have you spent your last four years?*
- *This is also used for activities and honors section of common application*

# Freshman Year

- School Activities:
- School Sports:
- Community Service
- Employment
- Trips

**Freshman Year Summer**

# Prewrite a few essay prompts


- Your essay needs to be personal
- Be unusual find the extraordinary in the ordinary,
- Take an everyday incident and pick one aspect that was earth-shattering.
- Convey intellectual curiosity,
- Eliminate too many adjectives,
- Sharpen description
- Show don't tell
- Write from the heart

# Topics should focus on a narrow event


1. Trip to the beach, too broad
2. Conversation with a lifeguard about risks of surfing
3. My 4 years playing basketball at x school, too broad
4. Being the only senior on jv

*Focus on a narrow event: Take out your large magnifying glass*

- What it felt like to drive a car alone for the first time,
- Why you enjoy preparing a particular recipe can connect you with your ethnic heritage



**A college essay is great not because of  
the experience but because of the voice**



# Game Plan for the Essay

What is your goal

What are you trying to tell the admissions officer about yourself, not your accomplishment, but yourself.

Be reflective

Outline major points and how you will support them for your end goal

1. 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.

Critical components: **Focus** on background, identity, interest or talent

**Connect** to why it is meaningful and tells your story



2. 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?

Critical components: Identify challenge, setback or failure

Connect to how it affected you and what you learned

This is best shown through one example weaved into a story

3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

**Critical components:** Identify the belief or idea challenged

**Focus** on why you challenged it, what was your challenge, what prompted your thinking and the outcome

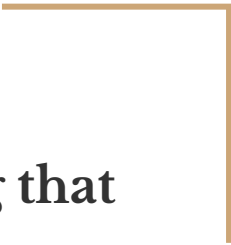
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

**Critical components:** Identify the problem(no matter the scale), significance to you, what was the solution, steps to identify solution.

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

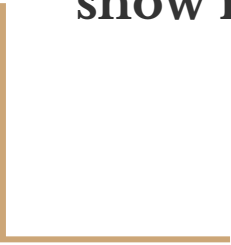
**Critical components:** Identify the accomplishment, event or realization

**Focus** on the personal growth and the new understanding. **Show** the change in you



6. 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?

**Critical components:** Identify the idea, why do you find it engaging, what part of your personality does it connect with, show it captivating you, who or what teaches you more



**7. 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.**

**Don't do because it looks like you are handing in a scho**

## You never get a second chance for a first impression

- Make your intro intriguing
  - a small detail that makes the admission counselor wonder what you are up to. They will keep reading to find out ex. Have you ever had your seat pulled out from under you
- Use an opening quote
- Write a quick, odd statement, get emotional (the way you felt about something) ex.
- Give an anecdote ( The last seconds of a game)
- Ask a question, (Take your subject and ask an unusual question that needs to be explained but isn't obvious) ex. Have you heard of a basketball coach reading poetry to his team