



This document can help you over the summer and fall.

Writing the College Essay-Some Tips

Think about yourself

What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your best qualities? Are you a pluggger? An intellectual? A creative type? Curious? Passionate? Determined?

Choose a positive quality you'd like to convey to the admissions committee

Don't pick an event or something you've done. President of the Nuclear Awareness Club is not a personal quality. Focus on a quality of your mind or of your character. Complete this sentence: "I am a very _____ person."

Dos

- **Answer the question. Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal:** Your essay must prove a single point or thesis. The reader must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. Try having someone read just your introduction to see what he thinks your essay is about.

Essays that try to be too comprehensive end up sounding watered-down. Remember, it's not about telling the committee what you've done—they can pick that up from your list of activities—instead, it's about showing them who you are.

- **Be Specific:** Avoid clichéd, generic, and predictable writing by using vivid and specific details.
- **Write the essay yourself**
- **Repeat yourself.** You can use the same essay for different colleges, as long as the essay answers the question. Don't forget to take out
- **Proofread:** Typos and spelling or grammatical errors can be interpreted as carelessness or just bad writing. Don't rely on your computer's spell check. It can miss spelling errors like the ones below.

Don'ts

- **Don't Tell Them What You Think They Want to Hear:** Most admissions officers read plenty of essays about the charms of their university, the evils of terrorism, and the personal commitment involved in being a doctor. Bring something new to the table, not just what you think they want to hear.
- **Don't Write a Resume:** Don't include information that is found elsewhere in the application. Your essay will end up sounding like an autobiography, travelogue, or laundry list. Yawn.
- **Don't Use 50 Words When Five Will Do:** Eliminate unnecessary words.

For more helpful information go to www.collegeboard.com

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty, which is available through our online store.

