



# COLLEGE ESSAY WORKSHOP

Mr. Mark Curtiss – Division Ave.

Ms. Elizabeth Hammer - MacArthur



# Application Essays

- Many students underestimate the importance that admissions offices place on the application essay.
- The application essay is one of the best ways colleges have to measure a student's writing abilities.
- The essay is often the student's one and only opportunity to speak to the admission committee directly using his/her own words.

# Application Essays

- Admissions officers are looking not just at the content, but also things such as grammar, spelling, diction, sentence structure, etc.



# The Essay Should...

- Tell a story only you can tell.
- Allow the reader to share the experience.
- Allow the reader to assess the quality of your thinking.

...and most importantly:

# Show Growth



-Essay readers want to hear about an interesting experience in your life, but they need to know what you did with that experience to change your life for the better.

-No matter what you write about, you must demonstrate how this experience affected you, what you gained, and how it helped you mature.

# GOOD WRITING IS CLEAR

- Do not be wordy or flowery.
- Be concise and direct. Do not say what you are going to say, say it again, and then say that you have said it.
- Do not use difficult or unusual words. Trying to beef up your essay with words from the Thesaurus is easy to spot.



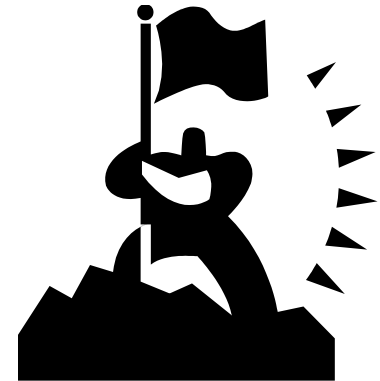
# GETTING STARTED

Step outside yourself and think thoughtfully and objectively about the time you've spent on the planet. Be strategic. You want to distinguish yourself from other applicants.

- How have you chosen to spend your time?
- What have you accomplished?
- What have you gained, both inside and outside the classroom?
- Why have you made the choices you've made?

# THE ESSAY READERS LIKE TO SEE THE FOLLOWING:

- Intellectual achievement and curiosity
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Self-discipline
- Commitment to others



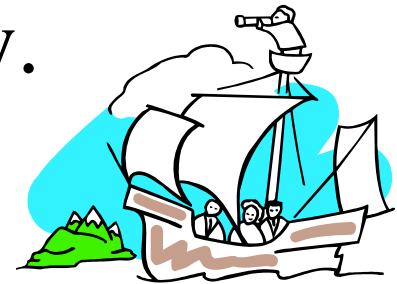


# Common Application Essays

- The new topics were formulated to better encourage applicants to present information about their personalities, character and other traits that isn't otherwise available to colleges through test scores, grades, or extracurricular activities.
- There is no longer a topic of your choice prompt.
- There is now a minimum (250) and maximum (650) word count, to be strictly adhered to.
- The topics are broad enough to give students wide latitude in framing a personal statement that weaves a story of who they are and what they would bring to campus, and 650 words (up from 500), is sufficient.

# Common Application Essay Prompt #1

- Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.



# Common Application Essay Prompt #2

- The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?



# Common Application Essay Prompt #3

- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?



# Common Application Essay Prompt #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.



# Common Application Essay Prompt #5

- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.



# TIPS

- Write in an **ACTIVE** strong voice, not the **PASSIVE** voice.

Example: I found the wet dripping dog VS.  
The dog was found.

- Do **NOT** use exclamation points!!!!!!!!!!
- Stick to the topic – do not wander.



# TIPS

- Do not make a list for an essay
- ***Do not be cute with font and format options***
- Do not rely on spell cheque





# TIPS

- Be careful of humor – it is great to be able to make a reader laugh, but it is difficult to do. Let it emerge..
- Do not repeat information from parts of your application, unless it is an integral part of your essay.



# FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM

- You must demonstrate that
  - You can write
  - You are a mature and interesting person who they would enjoy having at their school
  - You took the time and effort to create something sincere and enthusiastic



# MOST IMPORTANTLY

You must take the topic and make it specifically and vividly your own.

Every essay must be about you.

The essay must give them a glance at the human being behind the grades and test score. It's important to be yourself.



# College Essay Workshops

- DIVISION AVE. HS

- Mr. Goldman will be available after school on Tues. & Thurs. in Room 121
- Ms. Stritzl will be available after school on Thurs. & Fri. in Room 128
- Students sign up in advance – sign ups will be outside the above classrooms

- MACARTHUR HS

- Mr. OShea will be available before school on Tues. & Thurs. from 6:45-7:25am in Room 201A.
- Ms. DAmico will be available after school on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 2:30-3:30 in Room 209.
- Students must sign up in advance – sign ups will be outside the above classrooms

“Even after having read literally tens of thousand of application essays, it is still difficult for me to describe the ‘perfect’ essay. It is one of those things that I know when I see it.”

Tim Brunold

Director of Undergraduate Admissions  
Associate Dean of Admission and Financial Aid  
University of Southern California (USC)