www.acalltocollege.org
Newark High School
314 Granville Street
Newark, OH 43055
740.670.7424 info@acalltocollege.org

College Application Essay

Application essays/personal statements (these are one and the same) allow you to tell a narrative about your experiences, interests, and/or expectations for the future. They give admissions and scholarship committees a more complete view of your qualifications than an application form, résumé, or transcript can provide.

The Essay is Your Chance to Use Your Voice

- In the essay, you can speak in your own voice and personalize your application.
- What is "missing" from your application file? Think from the perspective of your readers. What information do they already have about you? You want everything in the personal statement to ADD information. Is there something special in one of your activities that isn't shown in a list alone?
- What experiences have you had that make you unique? Can you describe characteristics that would make you a valuable member of the college or university community for the next four years?
- Have you overcome any obstacles in your educational career? Or, have you hit any speedbumps (failed courses, problems with the law, etc.) that you need to explain?

What to Write About?

- **Read the prompt**. Although many schools require the Common Application, some have additional essay questions. Read each prompt carefully, answer questions specifically, and follow guidelines accurately.
- Is there a social cause you feel passionate about? Is there an event that has touched you in a personal way? Is there an academic subject that has led you to study outside of school?
- **Put yourself in the place of your readers**. Your essay will be one among dozens if not hundreds of others they'll have to read, so it's important to grab their attention from the get-go.
- Writing about oneself can be difficult but now is not the time to be bashful. Your essay needs to promote you. If **brainstorming** for your personal statement is difficult:
  - Make a list of your ten greatest accomplishments. At this point, no one expects you to have traveled the world, found a cure for cancer, or won an Olympic medal. An accomplishment can be defined on a personal level and doesn't necessarily need to demonstrate how you compare to other people.

Show Your Command of the Basics of Good Writing

- Make sure to answer the essay question and to follow all the instructions that are given.
- Start off with a strong opening paragraph that captures the reader's interest.
- Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- **Read your essay draft out loud**, paying attention to what you're saying. If you trip over your words, readers might also. If you must inhale several times, you likely have a run-on sentence.
- **Rewrite and Revise.** Leave yourself time to rewrite and revise. Start early so you can rework your essay.
- **Share a draft with readers whose opinions you trust** and ask them to give you constructive feedback.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR WRITING A COLLEGE ESSAY

1. **Start early.** More time = less stress. You'll have plenty of time to give the essay your best effort.

2. **Be yourself.** One of the biggest mistakes students make is writing what they think others want to hear, rather than about an issue, event, or person they care about. An essay like that is not just boring to write, it's boring to read. Think of your essay as a creative way to help college officials get to know you as a person.

3. **Be honest.** College admissions officers have read hundreds, even thousands of essays. They are masters at discovering any form of plagiarism. Don't risk your college career by buying an essay off the internet or getting someone else to write your essay.

4. **Stay focused.** Read the essay question carefully. Jot down a few ideas, then choose the one that looks like the most fun to write about. Stick to that main theme throughout the essay. Essays can help you make your case to admission officials, but don't go overboard. There will be opportunities elsewhere in the application to list all your achievements.

5. **Put your best foot forward.** Applying online may feel like you're sending an email, but you're not. Incorrect capitalization or abbreviations like B4 or "thanx" are not appropriate for a formal document. Make sure your essay represents the best of you.

6. **Write and rewrite.** Don't try to knock out a masterpiece on your first try. For your first draft, write anything that comes to mind about your topic. Let it "rest" for a few hours or a few days. When you come back to the draft, look for ways to make it more focused and better written.

7. **Get a second opinion.** When you've rewritten the essay to your satisfaction, find someone who can give you advice on how to make it even better. Choose a person you respect and who knows something about writing.

8. **Keep an open mind.** Criticism can be tough to hear but try to listen with an open mind. You don't have to make every change suggested. After all, it's your essay and no one else's.

9. **Proofread, proofread, proofread.** Little errors creep in throughout the writing and editing process. Before you submit your essay, make sure to proofread.

10. **Don't expect too much from an essay.** The application essay is important, but admission's officers look at the whole package: your academics, extracurricular activities, standardized tests, and other factors.