



Lions, tigers, and essays... Oh my!

What is the College Essay?

- An essay is a clear, focused, relatively short, piece of writing.
- An essay must have a main point, a "So what?" around which you develop and organize your writing.

Goal of the Essay: It's about YOU!

- Your college essay personalizes the application process.
- It should reveal something about you that isn't evident in other parts of the application.
- It should demonstrate that you can communicate your thoughts clearly in written form.

Tips for Writing your Essay:

Content:

- Before you start your essay, READ THE ESSAY QUESTION –carefully. Be sure your essay answers or corresponds with the question you have chosen.
- Once you have a tentative focus (i.e. - main point), you must explain, support, give examples and details to develop and present your point. A narrative essay, which describes a particular event, must also have a point.
- Think about your audience - assume the reader is a stranger, intelligent but unfamiliar with your subject (particularly if it is a more personal, as opposed to issue oriented, essay).
 - Fill in the context –don't assume that the reader has a framework or reference point for what you are saying. Also, don't spend too much of the essay explaining background - try to have a balance between the explanation and the purpose of your essay
- Revise –Writing is not easy. Do a first draft. Practice is important in writing as well as in other endeavors like sports, music, or theatre.

Grammar/Mechanics:

- Proof your work!
 - Reread, reorganize, rework, rewrite until you are satisfied. Don't be afraid to change the focus as sometimes you start writing about one thing and realize that you really have a different focus.
 - Tip - Try throwing out your initial first paragraph and starting with your second paragraph.
- Pay attention to the conventions of the English language. Grammar, mechanics, spelling, and punctuation rules allow us to communicate with each other.
 - Use a dictionary, spell checker, grammar book.
 - Read your essay out loud – How does it sound?

Big Picture: Things to Remember

- Operate with the basic assumption that you have something meaningful, something of value, to say to others.
- Don't be afraid to develop your own voice.
- Take pride in your work - it represents you to others and people will make judgments about you based on your writing.
- Quality is more important than quantity.
- Finally - Remember that you have control over what you put on paper.