

Writing a Successful College Essay

Timberlane Regional High School
Guidance Department



The Important Stuff

- Why write an essay?
 - Your opportunity to reveal unique qualities.
 - Allows admissions to understand your motivations, creativity & personality.
- How long is it?
 - Most often between 250-650 words. (1 pages-ish, double spaced)
 - Don't write one longer than required!

How to Start

- Read the questions. Think about the questions.

- Common Application Examples

- Some students have a background or story that is central to their identity, they believe their application would be incomplete without it. Please share your story.
- Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, what lessons did you learn?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there? Why is it meaningful?
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community or family.

Things you should DO



- Do get creative- how can you stand out?
- Do answer the question. Be direct.
- Do answer honestly.
- Do reveal personal information, but have boundaries.
- Do begin early!

Things you SHOULDN'T DO

- Don't tell them what you think they want to hear.
 - *"I will be a great addition to your college campus, I will use all of my free time to study and will go to bed early on weekends."*
- Don't write a resume.
 - *"During my freshman year I was on the Varsity soccer team. In my sophomore year I started a youth group. In my junior year I made National Honor Society. In my senior year I got a job at a summer camp."*
- Don't use 50 words when 5 will do.
 - *"Over the years it has been pointed out by my parents, friends, and teachers- and I have even noticed this about myself, as well- that I am not the neatest person in the world." OR you could say.... "I am a slob."*
- Don't overuse clichés.
 - *"I want to help people. I think it is so incredibly horrible that there are people in this country who do not have enough food to eat. I want to help end world hunger."*

One more thing you SHOULDN'T DO

- Don't forget to proof read!
 - *“After I graduate form high school....”*
 - *“My sister has always been my best fried....”*
 - *“UNH is my number one, top choice school...”* when you send the application to Plymouth & Keene!



Make it visual!

- *“I think it is important for parents to be involved in their children’s lives.”*

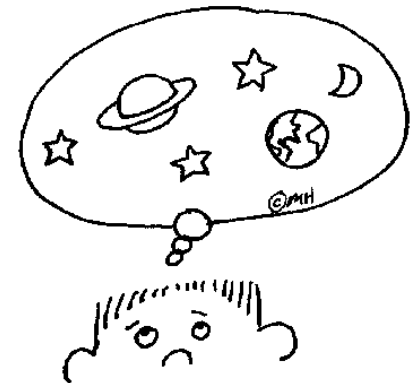
OR

- *“While my parent’s shoes filled with water, and their fingers turned white from the cold, I learned how to be a leader and a teammate on the soccer field.”*

- *“I enjoy having dinner with diverse groups of people and have learned a lot from them.”*

OR

- *“While the slices of pizza disappeared, we discussed celebrations around the world. From wearing dragon costumes to celebrate a new year, to dia del los muertos and why Halloween stands for more than costumes & candy.”*



Brainstorm – Environment/Content



More Information

- Ask your English teacher to proofread.
- Visit your guidance counselor for ideas/suggestions.
- Use the Writing Lab
- Visit college websites for examples
 - www.collegeboard.org
 - www.nhheaf.org