**Students Speak: How I Conquered the Application Essay**

The college application essay is the perfect place to give admission officers a picture of who you are beyond grades, test scores and a list of extracurricular activities. But many students struggle to get started or to come up with ideas. Read about how these students approached their essays.

**Q: What did you write about?**

**A:** My Common Application was about my heritage. The other ... essays I wrote ... were about my views on the death penalty, my thoughts on the Nevadan education system, my favorite academic experience at Girls Nation and how I define true success.  
 —Wen Hui, high school senior

I wrote my college essay on not believing in the word *regret*. The essay discussed taking chances and learning from each experience [and] never regretting a single thing that you choose to do.  
 —Sara, college senior

One prompt basically said, “Newton’s first law of motion states that an object in motion tends to stay in motion in the same direction unless acted upon by an external force.” My first reaction was, “I’m not a science guy. How do I write about this?” But in essence, it simply asked me to reflect on my background and think about how an external force has ... caused me to change direction. I thought of so many things to say about the overly protective community I live in.  
 —Alexander, high school senior

I decided to write about my family's car accident. Although it was a painful essay to write, I feel the judges were able to get a better view of my personality from it.  
 —Michelle, high school senior

**Q: From your experience, what advice would you give students about approaching the essay?**

**A:** I think that letting the readers get to know you on a personal level is something everyone should strive for in writing an admission essay. Reveal your true self.  
 —Michelle, high school senior

I began by searching Google to find ways to format a college essay. Over time, I found helpful blogs that eased my anxiety. I started to jot notes down and formed an outline with my answers, and from there, I transitioned those thoughts into my college essay.  
 —Bianca, college senior

Do not let the thought of college application essays scare you. Some of the topics, in my opinion, have been fun ones to tackle. ... Some of the questions asked me to write about my hobbies. Because the questions were personal and related to what I enjoy, it made the process fairly painless.  
 —Alexander, high school senior

Write your college essays as though you are talking to a new friend about who you are and what your goals are.  
 —Jose, high school senior

When I met with an admission counselor at the University of Maryland, the thing she most emphasized was to be creative and different. She said that they too often get the same essays over and over again, so the creative ones that come by really stand out.  
 —Jen, high school senior

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays/8-tips-for-crafting-your-best-college-essay>

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance/applications/essay>

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