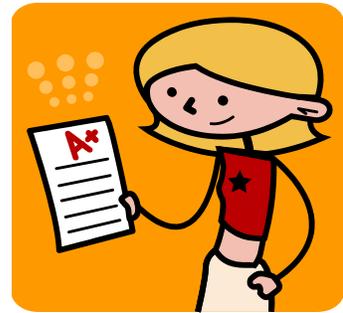


# Three Steps to a Great College Essay

You, in 500 Words or Less

The college application essay is a chance to open your personality, charm, talents, vision, and spirit to the admissions committee. It's a chance to show you can think deeply and write clearly about your thoughts.



## Prewriting – Step 1

To begin, you must first collect and organize potential ideas for your essay's focus. Since all essay questions are attempts to learn about you, begin with yourself.

- **Brainstorm:** Make a list of your strengths and outstanding characteristics. Focus on strengths of personality, not things you've done. For example, you are responsible (not an "Eagle Scout") or committed (not "played basketball").
- **Create a Self-Outline:** Now, next to each trait, list five or six pieces of evidence from your life—things you've been or done—that prove your point.
- **Find Patterns and Connections in material you've brainstormed:** Group similar ideas and events together.

## Drafting – Step 2

- The **introduction** gives your reader an idea of your essay's content.
- The **body** presents evidence supporting your main idea. Use narration and incident to substantiate.
- A **conclusion** includes a few lines to nail down the meaning of the events and incidents you've described.

## Editing – Step 3

When you have a good draft, it's time to make final improvements to your draft, find and correct any errors, and get someone else to give you feedback.

- **Let It Cool** by taking a break from your work and come back to it in a few days. Does your main idea come across clearly?
- **Feedback Time** Have someone you like and is truthful to read your essay. Ask them to tell you what they think you're trying to convey. Did they get it right?
- **Edit Down** Your language should be simple, direct, and clear.

### Dos

- Have a single point or thesis. The reader must be able to easily identify your main idea and follow it from beginning to end.
- Don't try to be too comprehensive. Make your essay thoughtful and concise (to the point).
- Develop your main idea with vivid and specific facts, events, quotations, examples, and reasons. There's a big difference between simply stating a point of view and letting an idea unfold in the details.
- Avoid clichéd, generic, and predictable writing by using vivid and specific details.

### Don'ts

- Don't tell them what you think they want to hear
- Don't write a resume
- Brevity: don't Use 50 words when five will do
- Don't forget to proofread

Article: The College Application Essay, by Sarah Myers McGinty. Source: collegeboard.com