

## College Essay Writing Sequence

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### Instructor's note

Students will write their own college application essay in this lesson by working through each piece of the essay, including analyzing the prompt. This learning unit is to be conducted using one powerpoint presentation for two days. It can be extended into additional days if/as needed.

1. [Session One: Factors for Creating a well-written College Essay](#)
2. [Session Two: Creating the College Essay, piece by piece](#)

### Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Identify and apply the preparation steps for formatting a college essay
- Describe and evaluate ideas for their own college admissions essay
- Analyze a college essay prompt
- Write a draft of their own college admission essay

## Session One: Factors for Creating a well-written College Essay

### Preparation

Materials needed:

- Instructor access to: [Crafting a College Admission Essay Slide Presentation](#) (Slides Session One: 1-9)
- Access to [online Personality Assessment test](#)
- Computers or writing materials available to students

### Activity 1: Icebreaker

1. Students will take the [online Personality Assessment test](#).
2. Students can scan through the definition and breakdown of their personality results according to this tool.
3. Have students hold on to their results until later on in the lesson.

### Activity 2: Getting Started on the College Application Essay

1. Review and provide explanations for tips on slides 1-5. It is suggested that the instructor elaborate as needed on each point in the slides. Students can offer additional tips that can be included on the slides for the future.
  - a. For example:
    - i. Slide 2: Explain the importance of taking their time when writing their essays. They should understand why starting early is beneficial.
    - ii. Slide 3: Explain how the internet can be their best friend when looking up how to begin their essay. Templates are available on different forums. Feel free to find one to use and display on the screen as the use is explained to the students.
    - iii. Slide 4: Have students reflect on their life. Are they comfortable talking, writing or sharing a story?

- iv. Slide 5: Give the students momentum to let their individual personalities shine in their essay. Explain that they can express their personalities but should be careful they are not too extreme.
2. After slide 5, the instructor will go back to the personality test icebreaker and relate it to what the students should write about and how they should write it. Their individual personalities should come out in their essays. Note that some students might not see themselves reflected in the test's results, in that case they can use their own self-perception as a profile.
  - a. How can their personalities be displayed within their essay?
  - b. What does their personality say about them?
  - c. Do they have a personal story that can relate to their personality traits?
3. Continue to review and explain slides 6-9. It is suggested that the instructor elaborate as needed on each point in the slides. Students can offer additional tips that can be included on the slides for the future.
  - a. For example:
    - i. Slide 6: Explain how using unfamiliar words or words they do not fully understand can make the essay too complex or confusing.
    - ii. Slide 7: Explain the difference between writing a college essay and texting their friends on their phones. No abbreviations for words should be used unless necessary.
    - iii. Slide 8: Explain that this is THEIR story. Explain when and where to cut back from certain information and when to include it.
    - iv. Slide 9: Explain how it can take a few tries or drafts to reach their best work.

## Closing

Ask the students to respond to the following prompts:

1. What makes them unique? (Give 2 reasons or examples)
2. What hint or tip do they think they might struggle with the most?

## Session Two: Creating the College Essay, piece by piece

### Preparation

Materials needed:

- Instructor access to: [Crafting a College Admission Essay Slide Presentation](#) (Slides 10-22 to be filled out together)
- Computers or writing materials available to students

### Activity 1: Icebreaker

- 1) In pairs, have students share which closing question they decided to respond to and what their response was.
- 2) Elicit some responses from a few students.

### Activity 2: Parts of the College Application Essay

- 1) Review and give explanations for tips on slides 10-16. It is suggested that the instructor elaborate as needed on each point in the slides. Students can offer additional tips that can be included on the slides for the future.
  - a) For example:
    - i) Slide 11: Explain the importance of grabbing the reader's attention with the first sentence. The students should think of an exciting or intriguing way to start their essay.
    - ii) Slide 12: Read through each sentence from applications for Stanford University. After each one, ask the students why it worked and if they would want to read on.
    - iii) Slide 13: Explain the purpose of a pivot sentence. Students should learn how to move through their essay smoothly without jumping around from fact to fact. The pivot sentence is pivotal! PUN INTENDED
    - iv) Slide 14: Have students read each sample introduction paragraph out loud or to themselves (your preference). After each one, review why the students are intrigued to read on and why the paragraph worked.

- v) Slide 15: As students respond to the above questions (regarding slide 14), type them on this slide. Students should participate and learn what works.
- vi) Slide 16: Give the students time to read all six essay prompts that are shown or read each one out loud with them.

### Activity 3: Drafting First Sentence

- 1) Give students 5-8 minutes to choose a prompt that they can relate to or would prefer to write about. Tell students to think and write down a first sentence that they would use to begin a college essay for the prompt of their choice.
- 2) If they finish sooner, ask them to choose a second option and do the same thing for that one.
- 3) Return to slide presentation and begin going through slides 17-23.
  - a) For example:
    - i) Slide 17: Read the essay prompt one more time out loud. Ask which students would pick this one. Of those students that raise their hands, have students give you suggestions of what a great first sentence would be for this prompt.
    - ii) Slide 18 - 23: Repeat above (slide 17 directions) for each slide from slide 18 through slide 23.

### Activity 4: Drafting Introduction

- 1) Have students use their drafted first sentence to lead into their pivot sentence.
- 2) Give students ample time (about 10 minutes) to create an introduction using their first sentence, and their pivot sentence.
- 3) Make sure to guide students to have their introductions to be at least 5-7 sentences.

## Closing / Exit Ticket

Ask students to respond verbally or in writing to the following prompts:

- 1) How comfortable are you with your first sentence?
- 2) How comfortable are you with your pivot sentence?
- 3) How comfortable are you with your introduction?
- 4) Do you think you need assistance with any of the above?

## Homework: First Draft of College Essay

- 1) Have students complete their first draft of their already started College Admissions Essay.
- 2) They should submit it for review. Read through each one with important suggestions and constructive critique.
- 3) If necessary, extend this learning unit to more than two sessions.