

Strengths Wheel Self-Reflection for College Essays

Writing about yourself can seem scary, especially when it feels like your future may be riding on your words! An effective personal narrative is a bit like a makeover show because it shows personal growth. However, writing about how you've changed as a person can feel vulnerable. After all, to show personal growth you must show who you were *before* in order to show who you are *after*. Lingering in the *before* may seem intimidating, but remember: Challenging life events often help people develop personal strengths afterward. So let's start with your strengths.

DIRECTIONS: For this brainstorming activity, we're going to work backwards and identify your strengths before brainstorming essay topics.

1. Review the strengths wheel on the next page. Highlight each statement that you identify with or that you feel describes you. These statements are adapted from social-emotional learning (SEL) standards.
2. Turn and share with a partner. Which statements did you highlight? Why?
3. Then, add 3-4 strengths for the empty wheel slices: "At Home" and "At School." These should be specific *to you*. For example, "At School" strengths don't have to be academic. They could be related to sports or activities. Strive for strength statements that are precise. For example, it's not enough to say, "I am good at soccer." Instead, clarify the skills that make you good, such as "I am a positive teammate" or "I am a quick thinker on the soccer field."
4. Next, choose 4 or 5 statements from the entire wheel to circle. These are the strengths you consider most important. Beneath the wheel, reflect on why you chose them and what you think they represent about you.
5. Finally, reread what you've written about yourself. What events have occurred in your life that illustrate one or more of these strengths? List as many as possible. Each one is a potential topic for your college essay.

What are my strengths?

