

**College Essay Writing Webinar
Packet**

Homeschoolers of Maine

**October 22, 2021
10:00am**

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Bring:
-your webinar packet
-a highlighter
-a writing utensil
-questions

College Essay Tips

The College Essay is a “YOU” statement—values, character, view on life, talent, interests, achievements, etc.

1. Write about something you are passionate about.
2. Tell a story about yourself—a slice of your life.
3. Be yourself—use your own voice.
4. Don't procrastinate—Act as if your life depends on this essay.
5. Keep the tone light—no self-deprecation.
6. Generally admissions offices are looking for evidence of ability, motivation, creativity, self-discipline, and growth potential.
7. If you feel the need to address a weakness, show how it is an implicit strength. (For example, if you had poor grades in 9th grade, you can show how much you've improved, how you learned to make good choices and stick with them, and how you can get through a crisis, etc.)
8. Sell yourself—How will your presence improve their college/the world? (This is the time to brag.)
9. Personal Narrative—SHOW, don't tell—use 5 senses detail, engage the reader in an experience, don't write out a list of accomplishments (the admission office already has this in your application).
10. “Make me care about you.” –Middlebury College Admissions Counselor
11. Content is important, but do not forget about good writing! Have some proofread your paper for errors!

NOTES

- Details and specific examples are important. Create an experience.
- Read good writing.
- Be real.
- Try thinking metaphorically--compare your life to something (a pen, sailing, a farm, feet, etc.)
- How long should my essay be? (Check your prompt—typically college essays are one page—about 250 words)
- Simple topics are best.
- Opening paragraph—attention-getter is the most important part of your essay:
 - an anecdote
 - a zinger
 - straightforward statement
 - significant quotation or question
 - shocking fact or statistic
 - ETC.
- Qualities to emphasize (From Edward Fiske, *Real College Essay that Work*)
You--
 - have a sense of humor
 - value diversity
 - embrace learning
 - notice the little things
 - are deeply committed to an activity or idea
 - can overcome adversity
 - have initiative
- Qualities to AVOID (From Edward Fiske, *Real College Essay that Work*)
You—
 - are cynical
 - think you are a finished product
 - are likely to turn inward in college
 - are depressed
 - are self-destructive
 - lack integrity
 - tend to blame others
- Also, avoid trendy topics that everyone else will write their essays about:
 - whatever current crisis is going on
 - social media fads/trends
 - life-changing experiences that feel phony or contrived
 - quoting pop lyrics/social influencers/etc.
- During your revision process, keep an eye on sentence structure and employ sentence variety.

Additional Notes from the Webinar

Brainstorming Ideas

Sample Opening Paragraphs

1

"Visiting hours are from 3—4 and 6—8."

The room was dimly lit and wherever light did shine, it only did so sparingly. He stood there, in that white, ghostlike gown that draped down to his ankles. Standing only feet away, it was still as if I couldn't see or touch him, only worthy enough to admire his unfamiliar 5'5" silhouette. He didn't appear to recognize me much either and instead gazed at me like a stranger he was seeing for the first time. Still, his eyes were both calling for me to help him and leave him alone at the same time. He is my brother. (Angelique Henderson, New York University)

2

My mom and I have played Scrabble for twelve years. We have challenged each other to over three hundred games; not once have I been able to beat her. In my house, Scrabble is not just a fun little game that we play to pass the time; it is a battle for intellectual supremacy. (John R. Trierweiler, University of Michigan)

3

You strain to be able to see just one more line of the chart sitting twenty feet in front of you as if your fate depended on it. "Z!" you cry out confidently, but what is the next letter? Is it "C" or "G"? By now your eyes are sore from squinting. It is no use. You resign yourself to your destiny, telling the doctor, "I can't see any farther." You are myopic, destined to be among the one out of every four people in need of glasses. (Sam Liu, Harvard University)

4

I do not have a father on the alumni board of Brown, I don't even have an uncle there. All right, I was not elected to the presidency of some huge, national corporation. I can't (if you promise to keep it a secret) tell you of my Olympic trial in the javelin throw. (Probably because I've never seen one of those long, wormy things.) I do, however, have a seven-inch-tall plastic Godzilla. (Jamie F. Metzl, Brown University)

"Coffee or tea?"

5

A simple enough question, a question that seemingly requires an absentminded, automatic reply. Clearly, in this world one is either a coffee or a tea drinker. I, however, am an exception to this rule; I constantly vacillate between coffee and tea. My enjoyment of both drinks does not stem merely from flexible tastebuds, nor does it originate in a desire to be as little trouble as possible by drinking whatever is available. Rather, this ambivalence depicts two distinct sides of my personality. (Heather L. Nadelman, Yale University)

6

Demosthenes, Moses, Winston Churchill, and Somerset Maugham. You're probably wondering what possible link these great men of years past could have to this piece about Phil Rodgers. Furthermore, you're probably thinking that they have no apparent relation to each other. One was an orator, one a biblical figure, one a statesman, and still another an author. But a little-known fact is that all of these men were stutterers. Add me to the list. (Phillip Rodgers, Columbia College)

7

At the risk of transforming this application into a tract on the wonders of wrestling, I nonetheless wish to discuss my recent vacation through hell. Hell, by the way, is not located under the earth. No, the current residence of Satan is Edinboro, Pennsylvania. Hell opens for two weeks every summer and the operators slap on the snappy title "J. Robinson's Intensive Wrestling Camp." The daily routine for this camp is so rigorous that graduation with honors consists of receiving a black shirt with the daily schedule inscribed on the back in mute testament to the existence of this habitation of fallen angles. Each camp session and the dropout/casualty rate varies from 25 to 50% (even with an avowed policy of no refunds). I cannot describe the total impact of this place, but I can sure as J. Robinson's Intensive Wrestling Camp try. (Joseph Lisbon, Princeton University)

8

I have been thinking about numbers quite a lot, the number one in particular. The abstract quality of numbers fascinates me, and I've been trying to relate them to other abstract concepts, like wholeness and love and perfection. (Jennifer L. Cooper, Harvard University)

9

I do almost all my writing in my bedroom. The prewriting I actually do in bed, lying down, with my eyes closed. That way, no one can tell if I'm asleep or just thinking. Sometimes when I do that I really do go to sleep, but that's part of it, you see. (Michael Chaskes, Wesleyan University)

10

When I was ten years old, I met Vince Lombardi. I saw him at the post office. He was sitting quietly with George Marshall and Humphrey Bogart. Vince cast a triumphant smile in my direction. His excitement was so contagious that I could not help smiling with him. Mr. Marshall, however, seemed to stare right through me. His solemn gaze conveyed little more than that he had very important things on his mind. Then I looked up to Humphrey Bogart, who, with a suave movement, simply cocked his head to one side, and sat there, just looking at me. Yes, they had all been dead for many years, but I didn't really mind. In my room, armed with a pair of tongs, I gingerly slid each of them into the slots of homemade album pages, next to stamps of bright blue jays, waving flags, bursting flowers, a crooning Elvis Presley, and scores of others, which I had acquired over the past two years. (Alex Callen, Cornell University)

11

I grew up in a brick house on Nottingham Drive, a place with old furniture and young faces, with small rooms that never seemed to be empty. I grew up with my pointy nose buried in books, wearing stretch pants and bows and listening to my father's new songs on the guitar. I sat at a dinner table as girlish voices made fun of that pointy nose along with my big ears, and I finally learned to laugh about them. I grew up with a big-nosed father who always had a joke on his tongue and a mother who always had an answer. I heard that as long as I worked hard enough, I could do anything. (Marie Crowder, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

12

Sweltering heat, abhorrently close quarters, and short tempers. Sweatshop? No, such were the family vacations of my youth—countless hours in a poorly air-conditioned vehicle, seven traveling companions and a driver whose frustration often bordered on road rage. It has been said, however, that traumatic experiences forge strong relationships and teach us important life lessons. In fact, it is unavoidable not to learn a little bit about human nature when you are seated so close to another person that you can't tell where they end and you begin. Looking back, summer vacations have constituted some of the most vividly memorable times of my life. From my cramped place in the back seat, I developed a curiosity for knowledge, an appreciation for my lively family, and learned more card games than a career gambler. (Clare K. Malone, Georgetown University)

SAMPLE COLLEGE ESSAYS

Adam Candeb
Colleger Yale University

I have been telling lies all my life. It's not as if my lies are malicious or even self-serving. I just like to test people's credulity with fantastic stories of my own invention which I am somehow able to tell with a very straight face.

I told my first fib in Sunday school at age five. I had ignored the teacher, and when she scolded me for not listening, I answered meekly that I was hard of hearing. My poor Sunday school teacher was moved with remorse and sympathy toward her disabled student, and afforded me special attention to make up for my disadvantage. Unfortunately, this idyllic state of affairs ended two weeks later in Horwit Teller where my teacher met my mother and asked her what was being done about my hearing problem.

My grade school friend, Nell, was fascinated by the very strange old lady who once lived in our house and honeycombed it with peep-holes. They had all been sealed except for one which looked into my older sister's bathroom. Nell never came to my house without furiously inspecting the walls near that room. When after two years, I finally confessed the truth, our friendship ended, since Nell had no sense of humor.

I heard many lectures of the evils of making up stories and many renditions of that children's classic, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. These warnings did not prevent me from telling Todd about my maternal grandmother who played contrabassoon for the Philadelphia Orchestra or Amy about my pet parakeet, Louise, whose eggs we ate regularly for breakfast.

Junior High marked the creation of my greatest fib, my dear, beloved, and nonexistant sister, Adalgisa Candeb, named after the Druid temple virgin in Bellini's opera *Norma*. She attended Oberlin College where she studied art-anthropology and fell in love with the French art historian Thierry de Beaumont, a direct descendent of Josephine, Empress of France. They lived in France where they researched the Neanderthal paintings in the Lascaux caves. When Adalgisa became bored with Thierry she ran away to the Antarctic with Haskon Lagerhof, a Swedish ornithologist. Together, they studied the migratory patterns of Emperor penguins on the Ross Ice

Shelf. Mrs. Kaplan, the woman who used to carpool to tennis clinic, still inquires about Adalgisa's health whenever I see her and is amazed that she has yet to catch a cold in the Antarctic.

After Adalgisa I resolved never to fib again, but last summer at the University of Pennsylvania, while I listened to some students whine about their awful parents, the uncontrollable, creative impulse overwhelmed me, and off I went. I never see my parents, I told them. My mom, an archeologist, is always on digs in the Yucatan Peninsula; my dad does research on acid rain for the Canadian government in a lakeside cabin in Northern Ontario. I have to stay home with my evil guardian, Mrs. Crumbschurtz, a freelance artist, who designs the decorations on Dixie paper cups. She is so mean that I am only allowed out once every three weeks. These kids were aghast, and they invited me to live with them. That night my resident teaching assistant told me that if I wanted to discuss any personal or family problems, his door was always open.

Why do I make up these stories? My favorite English teacher once offered an explanation that appeals to me. According to her, storytelling is the first step to literature. The hallmark of any literary person is, therefore, an interest in stories. In any case, I no longer fib to people! I save my stories for my writing, and I would never lie about important things like college applications . . . honest.

Joanne B. Willkinson
Collegee Brown University

HANDS

My father has always said that I have "brain surgeon hands," probably because they're rather large with fingers so long and thin that my school ring has to be held on with masking tape. Those who know less about my ambitions tend to call them "basketball player hands." Of course, there is always that small minority that persist in calling them "baller hands." (Although I danced for nine years, I no longer harbor dreams of Nutcrackers and Swan Lakes.) Under it all, I am primarily a writer; writing has allowed me to express my thoughts and ideas in every discipline, and in the words of Carl Van Vechten, "An author doesn't write with his mind, he writes with his hands."

Often, when I have a free moment, I find myself looking bemusedly at these hands of mine, and reflecting on the many things they have done. When I was a child, these hands curled themselves around a crayon to scrawl my first letters; they clutched at the handles of a bicycle, refusing to trust my training wheels; they arched delicately over my head in pirouettes and sild, wriggling, into softball gloves. Later, they held a pen ready to express all the ideas and questions and answers that bloomed in my mind. These hands once plunged deep into the pinafore pockets of my candy-stripping uniform, emerging to write messages and lab orders, punch telephone numbers, steady syringes—all with growing ease and authority: They went with me when I babysat to earn pocket money and volunteered in my pediatrician's office, and they touched feverish foreheads and held smaller hands, trying to comfort and cheer.

They graduated to a white lab coat's pockets and learned to inject mice and create lab charts for lab data. They supported my chin during late-night studies. They hoisted my increasingly heavy knapsack to my shoulders and toted it back and forth to literary editing sessions, Spanish dinners, and council meetings. They donned white gloves to ring handbells with the Lambrequins, and twisted nervously behind my back while I performed; they adjusted colored lights for

school performances and learned to pluck a microphone from its stand with apparent ease. They dissected pigs and worms and cows, and thought they would never be rid of the smell of formaldehyde, but they survived. They have endured mouse bites, chlorinated water, chemical spills, and poison ivy; when they needed to retreat, there was always a plush teddy bear to cuddle.

Someday, these hands will grip forceps and retractors, tense and slick; they will rake through my hair with fatigue as I sit in library carrels studying graphs and figures. Someday soon, they will hold a daisy-adorned diploma from Lincoln School, and they will hold again, as they have in the past, trophies and book awards and certificates. I have confidence that they will become the hands of an M.D., with the power to heal and comfort solemnly implicit, and I have every hope that these hands will someday, thrilled and proud, touch the opened Van Winkle Gaites as they enter.

Joseph Libson
College: Princeton University

My Life

Chapter One: I become a truant

The best thing that I ever did for myself was skip nine days of school in a row in the eighth grade. Actually the benedictions did not arise so much from the truancy as from the apprehension. This does not mean that I had been an axe murderer for the previous sections of my life, but rather that an unusual circumstance led to a great improvement in almost every aspect of my life. I was getting mediocre grades (i.e., B's and C's) at a mediocre school. I was not taking drugs or doing anything particularly nasty, but I was being incredibly lazy. This sudden burst of lethargy that led to the nine-day truancy overcame the activation barrier that had prevented my parents from taking retaliatory measures in response to all of the smaller things that I had done. Their response was draconian; first they separated me and my brother (we are exponentially more troublesome when together). In addition to deciding to send me to another school to separate me and my brother, my parents also decided that the punishment should extend into the summer since the deed had been done late in April and the school's punishment of nine Saturday detentions (yes, like the ones in *The Breakfast Club*) and disciplinary probation seemed insufficient. This planting season sentence consisted of my taking summer courses. Thus, it came to pass that I took algebra II before ninth grade.

When I arrived at Walnut Hills, which is the best academic public school in the city, I knew no one. This temporary exile resulted in a great discovery. Since I had no one to talk to during class, I decided that I would listen to see if the teacher was saying anything interesting. Lo and behold, knowledge flowed into and through me as excellent grades flowed out. At the tender age of thirteen, I had discovered that if I listened, I would understand. I had four straight-A quarters at Walnut Hills and transferred to St. Xavier, an even finer institution. It was closer to home and besides that my parents had heard that it was a "tough" no-nonsense school (good for discipline problems). As an additional plus, due to variances between the curricula of Walnut Hills and St. Xavier, I was able to become two years advanced in mathematics. Thus I was taking BC Calculus during my junior year at St. Xavier. My innovative listening theory still held at St. Xavier although more effort had to be put in to get the same grades simply because St. Xavier was a more difficult school.

Skipping nine days of school made me a better person, there is no doubt about it. Not only did my academics improve, but my devotion to athletics was enhanced to that of a religious fanatic and my sense of morals was even improved. I changed from a selfish rather unfriendly and sarcastic person into a more giving and open (but still sarcastic) individual. But, I was lucky; I got caught.

Essay by Sarah Lindsay

"I don't do throw-up."

My own words were coming back to haunt me as I heard one of my campers yell, "Ewww, Bridger threw up." I froze. I forced myself to turn around and look. I glanced quickly, then immediately looked away. I stopped breathing through my nose so I wouldn't be able to smell it. I was horrified.

The one thing that I have most is throw-up. Looking at it causes me to gag. Earlier that week I had been talking to my friend, Molly, who was a counselor in Cabin 3. She was telling me how she had had to clean up her camper's vomit.

"I would never be able to do that," I said.

"Well I didn't have a choice," Molly replied.

"I just...I don't do throw-up," I retorted.

Working at Camp Seafarer on the "Crystal Coast" of North Carolina for the summer was like a dream to me. I had gone there as a camper, and my experiences there have influenced my life greatly. The counselors were so supportive, and it seemed like they never ran out of energy. I was excited to have the opportunity to affect someone's life the way my counselors had affected mine. Being a counselor, though, was more work than I had anticipated. I was always exhausted, and it was hard to keep giving 100 percent of myself twenty-four hours a day. In the end, however, it was worth staying up with a homesick camper or saying a longer goodnight to the shyest girl to help bring her out of her shell. It was just so much responsibility trying to keep twelve ten-year-olds safe, while trying to help them have a great summer. Now my responsibility was spreading to the one thing I dreaded most, cleaning up throw-up.

I looked around at Bridger who looked like she was either laughing or crying. I assumed she was crying since she had just gotten sick. Then I noticed my co-counselors, Jessie and Litz, standing around. I looked at them, waiting for them to take the initiative and start to clean up. But they didn't even move towards it. Then Jessie made a move.

"I'll take Bridger to the health center," she said
Damn, I thought, *I should have volunteered to do that.* I glanced at

Litz.

"Sarah, I'm busy. Why don't you clean it up?"

I couldn't believe it! I was stuck with doing the one thing I have always said I would never do. *All right, I can do this,* I said to myself. *What to get first?...Paper towels!* I went into the bathroom to find some, but we were out. *Okay, it's going to be okay. I'll just go to the cabin next door.* I got some paper towels from Cabin 9 and hurried back to my cabin. As I approached my enemy, the throw-up, I noticed a lot of girls were crowded around me laughing.

"This is not funny girls, Bridger's sick," I told them and they backed up, still giggling softly.

All right here goes nothing, I
I looked around at Bridger
who looked like she was either
laughing or crying.

as fast as I could and threw them into the trashcan. I had done it! *I can handle this job; the late nights, exhausting days and all the puke that comes with it,* I celebrated. Then I noticed that now the whole cabin was laughing.

"Sarah!" Bridger exclaimed, "The throw-up was fake!"

I learned, that summer, that with responsibility comes great rewards, such as my campers' hysterical laughing over the fake throw up. Every smile and every hug made the draining job worth it.

Sarah Lindsay attends Vanderbilt University.

CYCLING

I came home from school, inhaled two bagels and a glass of orange juice, squirreled into a new pair of black Lycra chamois-lined cycling shorts, pumped up my tires, and carried my bike down the front steps to the driveway. Some days I rode south, up a hill, across a street and onto the bike path. Or north, past the polo field, along the river. I sang to myself, watched the odometer, and daydreamed, looking up occasionally at the trees whose leaves were just losing their summer green. In an hour and a half I returned home and recorded my distance and average speed on a homemade chart on my wall.

I began this routine in September of my junior year, a week after returning from my summer job as a bicycle mechanic in Massachusetts. I was training, preparing myself for an organized ten-week cross-country bike trip that was eight months away.

Miles accumulated: fifty . . . one hundred . . . two hundred fifty . . . six hundred. When the oak trees hung on to their very last leaves, I pedaled inside on a stationary bicycle and joined the weight-lifting club at school. Six days a week I exercised until one day in December I lost all feeling in my big toe. The numbness persisted; I loosened my toe straps; I stopped exercising; I called my pediatrician, a sports physiologist, and a neurosurgeon; I wrote to *Bicycling* magazine. A new pair of cycling shoes solved the problem. On a mild day in February, I took my new shoes for a ride in the park. I returned shortly with a flat tire and deflated spirits.

Miles paid off in more pain and frustration. In April I developed Osgood-Schlatter's disease, a tendonitis of the knees. Again I consulted unconcerned doctors and gym teachers, read health encyclopedias and *Prevention* magazine, rested, stretched, and took vitamins. Suddenly it was spring. In just two months I would be riding "seventy to one hundred miles a day" on a bicycle loaded with fifty pounds of clothing, food, and camping gear.

I told none of my classmates what I was doing. I was afraid of impressing them with my ambitious plans and then not following through because of knee trouble or illness. And would anyone believe

that I, a screwy kid, a failed soccer player, was going to pedal my bike four thousand three hundred miles? I scarcely believed it myself. I was sure that some injury, some accident, would render months of training useless.

As the dogwood bloomed, my enthusiasm waned. The road was so familiar, progress was barely noticeable, and I had run out of daydreams. My new bicycle, which had arrived completely unassembled in three boxes, made a new noise every day. One day an older cyclist caught up to me; he wanted to coast and chat. I told him after a while that I was training to ride across America. "That'll take some serious riding," he said with a laugh. The bike tour brochure gave two prerequisites for this trip: "You must be in *great* shape" and "You must *love* to bicycle!" When I had first read about the trip over a year before, I believed I could do it. But now I wondered if I were meeting some personal challenge or just inflicting punishment upon myself.

And then one magic day in gym class, I was trying desperately to do a handstand when my teacher said, "Hey, your legs are getting bigger; you been working out or something?" On the road that afternoon, I met a young couple who was riding from California to Maine. They told me that the TransAmerica Trail, which I would be riding, were wonderful. Every hill I climbed on the way home that day was an Appalachian pass; every headwind was a Colorado breeze. I rode up my driveway exhausted, but restless and excited.

During the first week of summer, I began to pack—among other things, a flashlight, five new tee-shirts, and my cycling shorts, now tattered, the chamois dry and cracked. I disappeared every morning with my bike and a snack and reappeared late afternoon, sweaty and mosquito-bitten. I constantly wondered about the other kids who signed up for the trip, if they were somehow more prepared and confident.

On the morning before my trip, my thigh muscle tightened up. My doctor was on vacation; the library was closed; I decided that I'd be back home within the week. But by midnight, my bicycle was sealed in a cardboard box along with an empty journal and a bottle of vitamins. I lay on my bed, exhausted but not sleepy, thinking about tomorrow as I had for many months past.

Julia D. Kyle
Colleger Princeton University

IN THE BARN

To the casual observer, my family might have seemed fragmented. My older brother Josh and I lived with our mother in Philadelphia. My two younger half-brothers, Allan and Kent, lived with their mother in the small town of Pipersville. The four of us spent every weekend together with our father, who lived in a nineteenth-century farmhouse near Doylestown. The farm hadn't been worked for decades, but the huge, slightly decaying barn still stood.

Whenever I think of my childhood, that barn looms large in my memory. Adults almost never went in there. I think they were a little afraid of it—and with good reason, too. The floorboards had rotted in some places, and unless you knew exactly where to walk, you risked falling through onto the concrete area below which had once housed the cows. In some rooms, ceilings were half caved in, and the superstition developed among us children that if we spoke above a whisper in those rooms, the ceilings would fall in on us.

But for the four of us, the barn held more than fear. Sometimes the barn was awe-full, almost holy. We would stand quietly in the still of the afternoon and watch myriad particles of dust glitter in the rays of the sun that slanted through the cracks in the walls. We could hear the almost inaudible creakings and moanings of beams which had held together for a century and were trying to last yet another day.

Sometimes the barn was interesting. Josh (whom we considered omniscient) would tell us how farmers used to build without nails, show us barn swallow's nests, or explain how bats can fly without sight. Sometimes it was challenging. Josh would lead us on expeditions to the top of the rickety silo, or to the uppermost windows which could only be reached by creeping precariously along the beams.

Sometimes it was terrifying. We would go into the barn at night and tell ghost stories. Some, I later found out, were well-known, like the Tell-Tale Heart, but the ones that still send a shiver up my spine were those we created just for ourselves. I remember one dark night when the wind was blowing through some wire, making a high-pitched wailing noise that sounded like demented laughter. The story that night was about four children (three boys and a girl, of course) who were killed, one by one, by the barn. Each time, just before it killed the next child, the barn started laughing. After that, whenever the barn "laughed," we would remember that night.

My father moved to another house several years ago. The barn has been boarded up so "children won't wander in and get hurt." Josh has married, and we're all too old now to be frightened by ghost stories. Yet sometimes we drive past the barn and those memories flood back, and I know that inside its crumbling exterior, the barn holds a part of us intact forever.

COLLEGE ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Step One: Complete the Personal Feedback Assignment.

Step Two: Choose a prompt from one of your college applications or you choose a prompt below.

Step Three: Keeping in mind what others have said about your, write an essay (Creative Writing Piece) that satisfies the prompt. Make sure that you develop an attention-getter that grabs the reader's interest and that you write your essay creatively.

Step Four: Have at least two people read your rough draft and give you feedback and send your rough draft to Angela Hurd at angela4homeadv@gmail.com.

Step Five: Using Angela's feedback and your reader's comments, improve your essay and then send revised copy to Angela.

Step Six: After making grammatical corrections, you are ready send off your essay to your colleges!

Sample College Essay Prompts:

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story. (2021-2022 Common App)
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? (2021-2022 Common App)
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome? (2021-2022 Common App)
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you? (2021-2022 Common App)
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others. (2021-2022 Common App)
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more? (2021-2022 Common App)
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design. (2021-2022 Common App)

8. You are required to spend the next year of your life in either the past or the future. What year would you travel to and why? (Brandeis University)
9. What matters to you, and why? (Stanford University)
10. What does #YOLO mean to you? (Tufts University)
11. You have been granted a free weekend next month. How will you spend it? (Yale University)
12. What is something about which you have changed your mind in the last three years? (Yale University)
13. How would you describe yourself as a human being? What quality do you like best in yourself and what do you like least? What quality would you most like to flourish and which would you like to see wither? (Bates)
14. What have you undertaken or done on your own in the last year or two that has nothing to do with academic work? (Northwestern)
15. Select a creative work—a novel, a film, a poem, a musical piece, a painting or other work of art—that has influenced the way you view the world and the way you view yourself. Discuss the work and its effect on you. (New York University)
16. Describe an intellectual experience of the past two years that has given you great satisfaction. (Amherst)
17. Tell us about the neighborhood that you grew up in and how it shaped you into the kind of person you are today. (Yale and University of Chicago)
18. If you could be a “fly on the wall” to observe any situation—historical, personal, or otherwise—describe what you would choose to observe and why. What would you hope to learn and how would it benefit you? (University of Pittsburgh)
19. Describe a risk that you have taken and discuss its impact on your life. (Kalamazoo College)
20. Tell us about one of the best conversations you ever had. (Stanford)
21. What single adjective do you think would be most frequently used to describe you by those who know you best? Briefly explain. (Stanford)
22. What is the best advice you ever received? Why? And did you follow it? (University of Pennsylvania)
23. Create a question we haven’t asked and then provide the answer. (Dartmouth) Ex. one student posed the following question: “Write about a time when life threw you a curve and how you handled it.”

PERSONAL FEEDBACK ASSIGNMENT

Because the college essay is a "YOU" statement, you must find ways to imply through a narrative what kind of person you are—traits, values, outlook, etc. There is a lot of value in gaining some perspective from others about what stands out in your personality and demeanor. You may be surprised what others see as your strengths and positive qualities! Therefore, ask the following of **at least four** people (3 adults and 1 peer):

What do you like most about my personality which I might describe in a college essay?

OR

What quality do I possess which you feel will help me to succeed in my future?

Comment 1

Name of commenter: _____

Relationship to you: _____

Comments: _____

Comment 2

Name of commenter: _____

Relationship to you: _____

Comments _____

Comment 3

Name of commenter: _____

Relationship to you: _____

Comments: _____

Comment 4

Name of commenter: _____

Relationship to you: _____

Comments: _____

Revision Checklist for College Essay

Before you create your final draft, be sure that you have completed the following:

___ Read through all of your feedback from your commenters and your instructor. Be sure to think seriously about the feedback and improve your essay.

___ Check the beginning of your essay—Does it draw in the reader and provoke the reader's interest? Make improvements to grab your reader's attention.

___ Check your essay for specific details from your experiences—Does the reader get to know you through this essay? If you have generalized your values or beliefs, add in some details from your experiences to give substance to your generalizations.

___ Check the tone of your essay—Does this essay sound like you and the way you communicate? If there are words in your essay that you would never use, consider changing those to your words.

___ Check for sentence variety—Does your essay use varied sentence structure? Make sure you are not starting all of your sentences with subjects. Take the time to change some of your sentences to create cohesion and a smooth flow that keeps the reader reading.

___ Reread your essay. Does your essay answer the prompt thoroughly? Make additions to your essay if necessary to completely answer the prompt.

___ Is your essay too long for the length requirement? If so, make cuts without damaging the integrity of your essay.