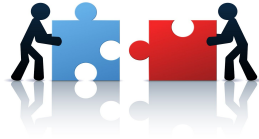


COLLEGEFIT



FIT>>THRIVE>>SUCCEED

BROOKLYN TECH HIGH SCHOOL WORKSHOP CRAFTING THE COLLEGE ESSAY SUMMARY

PARTS OF THE COLLEGE APPLICATION

1. The 5 parts of the College Application are:
 - Grades
 - Standardized Test Scores
 - Extracurricular Activities
 - Recommendations
 - Essays
2. Some similarities and differences among these 5 factors:
 - Essays are only one that allows students to completely control the narrative.
 - Unlike grades and recommendations there is no input from teachers.
 - Unlike extracurricular activities, students can highlight whatever strengths they like because there is no competition to shine as there are for leadership roles/opportunities in outside activities/groups.

IMPORTANCE OF THE COLLEGE ESSAYS

1. ESSAYS ARE VERY IMPORTANT! - Admissions officers DO read every essay precisely because it is a glimpse into who the student really is, as well as his/her ability to articulate and communicate that.
2. Some people think that if you don't have the grades or if your grades very are high for a specific school then the essay doesn't matter - which might be true - BUT:
If your college list is done well you should be close in terms of grades/scores to your reach schools, in the middle of your target schools and slightly above your

safety schools. This is how those colleges will view student's essays:

- Target schools - the essays are a major factor in distinguishing which students, who all have the same acceptable grades/scores, will be a good fit and provide the diversity they want.
 - They are concerned with yield - that the students who they accept will matriculate.
 - They are concerned with graduation rates and fit is best predictor.
- Reach Schools - a great essay can show that you are the type of person who really can contribute to the community or thrive in light of the programs or other unique quality the school offers and can overcome slightly below par grades or scores.
- Safety schools - Again, they are concerned with yield and they realize that they are a safety school, when they see your grades/scores. A compelling essay that reveals why that school is a great fit will make them believe that you might attend. And in light of their interest in graduation rates, they don't want you to come if you are not going to be engaged in the community or challenged and as a result decide to transfer!

3. MOST IMPORTANT - From our experience, we know that FIT is the best predictor of college success. We believe, we KNOW, that if a school is a good fit then it is more likely that the student will THRIVE, not just survive, and that will lead to success in college, in graduation rates, and in being prepared for life after college.

- SO - you should be happy that the admissions committee is reading every essay and is evaluating whether the student seems to be a good FIT!
 - They are shopping around for students who will bring the most to their unique college campuses and who will be happy and engaged academically and socially.
 - This is why it is so important that your student drive the essay process, with your support, so that it really does reveal his/her authentic self.

OVERVIEW OF THE TYPES OF APPLICATION ESSAYS

1. There are two different types of essays many college applications require:
 - Common App Essay (7 prompts, 650 words). The prompts can change every year so go to [the Common Application website](#) for a list of the current prompts.
 - Supplemental Essays - These essays vary from school to school as to subject and word requirements from one line to 500 words, but are generally 150-300 words

A. THE COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY

- It is not a place to brag, or to make sweeping generalizations about world peace, or to explain bad grades/scores or disciplinary issues.

- It doesn't have to be something GREAT that the student did or what he/she thinks the admissions committee wants to hear.
- It SHOULD be about a specific moment that reveals a passion, or unique character trait, or goal.
- Admissions officers want to hear about the human moments that they can relate to. Sometimes it is the mundane stories that make the best essays!

B. THE SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAYS

- These are VERY IMPORTANT, and NONE are OPTIONAL!
- Each response is a new chance to tell a different story or message about what you will offer their college.
- Typically the smaller the school the more of these essays they ask. They have fewer students so they are very picky about who will fit as they won't more naturally have a spectrum of types because of sheer numbers admitted.
- Generally the topics are:
 - most common - why this college/university?
 - Why this specific school in the university (engineering, business, etc)?
 - Why this major?
 - What community are you a part of and what does that mean to you?
 - What global or community issue most concerns/interests you?
 - Who has influenced you most and why?

HOW TO CRAFT THE ESSAY

The main goal of all essays: Reveal the student's authentic self in a way that is not shown by any other part of the college application.

This is what makes you compelling not just competent!

1. For all essays, Common App or Supplemental - Show Don't Tell
 - This is the difference between the following two first lines:
 - It was hot and noisy.
 - The music was blasting and the throbbing in my ears couldn't be louder as sweat was dripping down my back and I realized I was sticking to my chair.
 - Science tells us that people remember more about a story that they connect with than any set of facts regardless of how impressive.
 - Storytelling triggers a complex web of brain activity that links one human being to another. When you tell a story, your brain experiences a combination of memories, emotions and actions. When people listen to or read your story, their

brains experience the same combination of memory, emotion and action - as if the story is happening to them.

- Storytelling connects the admissions officer to you and makes them identify with you. It helps them envision you, or someone like you, and how you will fit on the campus.
- Another scientific fact - Most people are predominantly visual (60%), auditory (35%) or kinesthetic (5%) learners. They connect best by either seeing, hearing, or feeling. So you want to appeal to all these when telling a story.
- One great formula for writing an essay is:

Scenes+Reflections= a Balanced Essay

This will connect with the reader and make them care about you and learn something about you.

- Scenes are like movie scenes- they bring the scene to life by showing the reader what happened, put the reader in the scene, use imagery that appeal to 5 senses so that you appeal to all types of learners.
- Reflections -show the scene's significance to you (what is reader learning about you).
 - Human Connection: show what connects your experience with what others experienced.
 - Future implications : how does this show how you will contribute to the school.

Overview - Scene is the picture of what is happening, and reflection is like the voice over of the narrator telling you what is going on in his head so they can relate to you.

2. For all essays, if possible, create a "Hook". This is when the first line or two intrigues and captivates the reader. Your goal is to create positive CONFIRMATION BIAS, so that if a reader likes your first line or two they will read the essay and pay greater attention to the things that confirm their first good impression and less attention to the things that may not be as favorable.

- Hooks can:
 - Ask a question
 - Be shocking
 - Contrast ideas
 - Be dialogue
- Examples of Hooks:
 - Do you have body bags? The leak proof kind...we need as many as you can spare?
 - I've never broken into a car before!
 - I've recently come to the realization that community service just isn't for me. Now before you start making any assumptions, keep reading!
- Some good examples of great first lines are available by clicking on the link for FREE RESOURCES at the bottom of the page.

3. For Common App Essay : DO NOT write about the following topics: too many students choose these topics and the admissions officer assumes they have heard it before and loses interest before they get past the first line! This is **confirmation bias** working against you! Unless you have a really creative or unique take on it stay away from stories about:

- Grandparent/hero -the essay is supposed to be about you!
- Sports - sports injury, winning against all odds, didn't make the team
- Community service trip
- My first trip abroad
- I am first in my family to attend college
- Someone in my family has cancer, etc (Sorry! but true)

4. For Supplemental Essays Do's and Don'ts:

A. SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY DO's:

- Be Specific and Use Details. It is important that you do your research and put time and thought into each essay.
 - Ex- if you were to be about to marry someone, how would you feel if they said they love you because you are a good person, you have a great professional future and a good sense of humor, as opposed to specific things that are unique to you and no one else in the world and so they are drawn to you. You want to hear them explain why you are endearing to them, complete with flaws and quirks. You want them to back it up with stories about why they are so appealing to you.
 - Don't just repeat information like a college brochure. Show them that you have done your research and given a lot of thought to the specifics of the school and WHY it is important to you.
 - EX - "Your college offers a great sports program." VS "At your college I value the opportunity to build community around one of my favorite pastimes- Football! During my campus visit, I witnessed the power of your community and how a seemingly silly sport tied together people across disciplines, from different backgrounds, etc", and tell them why that is important to you in reaching your goals.
- Reveal Something New - Before you jump into another anecdote about your love of soccer or passion for community service, evaluate your application and figure out what you have left to say. What do they not know about you already? These supplements are the perfect place to further reveal your different passions and character. (What do you think is the greatest invention of all time?)
- UPcycle, Don't REcycle - Even though you may have fifteen supplemental essays, quite a few of them may ask the same or similar question (ie, Why this school/major?, or How

will you contribute to our university?). It would be tempting to just write one response and use it for multiple schools' essay, but beware. Colleges have read enough essays to know when you do this! Instead of just recycling the essay, UPCYCLE, the essay by using the same structure but adding in thoughtful details about the school.

B. SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY DON'Ts:

Don't:

- Focus on superficial aspects of the school like geographical setting or reputation.
- Just complement the school - "you have the best students, teams, etc".
- Waste time telling them what they already know about their campus, programs, etc.
- Be too broad and say everything. Pick one or two things that answer the question and drill down with them. Go deep not wide!

HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR STUDENT

1. For parents of Freshman and Sophomore students:
 - Encourage them to try many things and then immerse themselves in something they find they like.
 - Take notes, mention when they do something that is so unique to them.
 - Tell the student to note times when they felt super creative, happy or engaged.
 - Encourage them to READ - books, articles, blogs, anything outside of school to help them create their unique vision of the world.
3. For parents of Junior and Senior students (those beginning the process of completing the application).
 - Have a Positive Mindset - Talk about the essay in a positive way. Say that it will be fun to really think about what makes them tick. That you will support them in whatever they need.
 - WORDS MATTER!!!! If you start with a positive mindset they will look for facts that confirm that and pay less attention to fact/feelings that the process is overwhelming/hard/a waste of time!
 - Remind them that writing the essays is a PROCESS - Encourage them to do them early so there is time for many drafts.
 - They can even start by just spitting out an outline or even just a series of words or phrases about topics/issues/characteristics that are important to them.

- Let your student drive process. This is VERY IMPORTANT! These are their essays about what is meaningful to them. Don't tell them what to write about! If the essays are not authentic and in their own voice then they cannot be accurately interpreted by a college admissions officer and you might compromise getting into a school where they will really FIT!
 - Remember - Fit > Thrive > Succeed
- Brainstorm with the - Even though you shouldn't tell them what to write you can help them see what is special about them.
 - Remind them of stories from their past that showcase their strengths or unique qualities.
 - Ask meaningful questions - but if they still can't think of what to write after brainstorming ask them thoughtful questions like:
 - What would you do if you won \$1 Billion tomorrow (so you would have access to every opportunity and no restraints on your life)?
 - How would you spend tomorrow? What would your primary focus in your life be? Would you live on a farm? Read more? Still go to college? Help young cancer patients).
 - Why would you do those things?
 - These will provide great clues to who they really are.
- Proofread!!!! This cannot be stressed enough. Typos and grammatical errors are the best way to turn an admissions officer off. If you are not a good proofreader, encourage them to go to a teacher, peer, or professional for proofreading. It is best to have more than one person proofread the essay if possible!
- Remind your student to take breaks and not to obsess about these essays. Essay writing is not a full time job! Sometimes during a break from thinking about these topics, in a quiet space where the student can relax, have fun or think about something pleasant - the best ideas arise!
 - Remind them of one of your experiences where a great ideas came when you are NOT trying to think of great ideas! Did you ever have an AH-HA moment in the shower, the car, while watching TV?
- Help them understand everything we talked about here today (give them the resources we will send you)!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

We know that there is too much to cover in one 45 minute workshop, so we have provided you with access to some additional resources which you can access by clicking on the link at the end of this summary. If you have more questions and would like to discuss them with us please

contact us through our [CollegeFit](#) website contact page and we will get in touch with you as soon as possible. Don't forget to tell us how we can help you in the space provided! If we find that many parents have the same question we will send an email to all of you with the answers so you can all benefit from the information.

We hope we have helped you to understand the importance of the college essay and to begin to craft a compelling essay. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to work with us on any aspect of the college process. See link at bottom of page!

We look forward to talking to you!

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[Click here](#) (www.collegefitadvising.com) or on **CollegeFit** at top of page for more **Free Resources!**