**Tips for a Great College Essay**

1. **Start Early**! Essay writing takes time.
   1. **Rough drafts**
   2. **Several colleges = many essays**
   3. Consider **one central essay** that can be tweaked.
2. **There are no optional essays**. Write them all! Despite what the application may say, “Optional” is a test to see if you are willing to work harder for what you want.
3. **If you can make the admissions committee laugh, you will shine above the rest**. But be careful because what you think is funny might not be funny to adults – nothing off color or juvenile.
4. **Do not repeat information** that appears in any other part of your application.
5. **Show – don’t tell**. Look at the examples I have provided to get an understanding of this.
6. **Use active verbs and vigorous expressions**. Instead of “Due to my parents’ coaxing, I decided to try once more” say “My parents coaxed me to try again.”
7. A **strong hook and opening paragraph** are essential! Grab the admissions committee’s attention.
8. **Good writing is essential**, but that does not mean pompous language that is not the real person applying for college. Be yourself and allow your voice to come through.
9. **Be direct and specific**. Vague answers apply to everyone. **Distinguish yourself** from all other applicants.
   1. **Avoid clichés** and sentences that sound good but mean nothing. Make every sentence count.
   2. **Avoid worn-out literary sources**. Forget “to thine own self be true.” Over-used quotations, old saws, and familiar maxims will sap the freshness of your performance.
10. **Make a point and stick to it** – in other words, provide a comprehensive argument or narrative.
11. **Be authentic and make YOURSELF the center of the essay**. Allow the admissions committee see you with all your quirks and uniqueness. **You learn much more from failure than success – own it!**
    1. You may be asked to write about a personal experience, an achievement, or a person who is significant to you. Go beyond the what or the who and **dig into the how and the why**.
    2. If you write about a trip or event, describe how **this experience affected you and why it’s meaningful to you**.
    3. If you are writing about a person in your life, be personal and specific, not just sentimental. **Explain what this person did and how their actions, words, or example affected you**.
12. **Finish Strong**! Come to some new insight or understanding about yourself and your life. Avoid vague and predictable conclusions: “I learned a lot,” “I interacted with others different from myself,” “I benefited from the love and support of my family,” “I learned to work with others.”
13. **PROOFREAD**!!! Nothing ruins a positive impression like careless grammar or spelling mistakes. Have someone who is an expert at writing proofread your essays.
14. **Stay within the word/character count**. This is vital because it is a test of your creativity and ability to shine within the limits set.
15. **Other sources**:
    1. “The Only Four College Essay Writing Tips You’ll Ever Need” Meredith Reynolds, *Inside Admissions,* Tufts University Undergraduate Admissions <https://admissions.tufts.edu/blogs/inside-admissions/post/the-only-four-college-essay-writing-tips-youll-ever-need/>
    2. “How to Write a College Essay,” Kelly Mae Ross, Devon Haynie, and Josh Moody, *U.S. News & World Report: Education* <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-to-write-a-college-essay>