Tips to Answer the Essay Question:
Consider the following do's and do not's as you write your application essay!

Question: "Why go to college? Why here?"

Do:

- Answer the question being asked, not the one you'd like to answer.
- Before writing even one word, scrutinize the college offerings.
- Think hard about what you hope to get out of college, avoiding clichés or overused and common phrases, such as "I want an education." "I want to get a good, well-paying job" and "I want to be a success in my chosen field."
- Try to figure out why this college appeals to you.
- Focus on educational or personal reasons for going to college, not on social, economic, or family reasons.

Don't:

- Don't use flattery. All colleges already know how good they are.
- Don't stress that you love the college's location, size, or appearance.
- Don't tell a college that it's your "safe" school.
- Don't write that you're going to college because you don't know what else to do.
- Finally: don't take any of these precautions as the last word…use at your own discretion.

Question: "Who are you? How would you describe yourself as a human being? How would your college freshman roommate describe you? If you could strengthen one aspect about yourself, what would it be, and why? What quality do you like best about yourself? What makes you different?"

Do:

- Answer the question.
- Be honest. Search for qualities you really have!
- Emphasize specific observable qualities that show your distinctive personality.
- Imagine that your reader will someday have to pick you out in a crowd.
- Illustrate your qualities with examples. Use telling anecdotes to support your opinions of yourself.
- Ask people you know well whether they agree with your self analysis.

Don't:

- Don't be evasive. Stand up for what you think about yourself.
- Don't be too cute or coy. Sincerity is preferable.
- Don't choose a characteristic merely to impress.
- Don't write everything you know about yourself. Focus on one or two qualities.
- Don't write an essay fit for "True Confessions."

Question: "Would you tell us a story about yourself? (Write about a significant experience or event in your life and what it meant to you)."

Do:

- Answer the question.
- Choose an experience you remember well. Details make or break your story.
- Pick an experience you can dramatize. Let the reader hear people speaking and see people acting.
- Focus on a specific incident or event.
- Make yourself the central character in the story.

Don't:

- Don't think that a commonplace event can't be turned into an uncommonly good story.
- Don't choose a complicated event unless you can explain it briefly.
- Don't lie.
- Don't' ramble.
- Don't explain.

Question: "What is important to you? (What is your favorite quotation, and explain your choice? Identify a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence)."

Do:

- Answer the question.
- Choose a subject you care about.
- Let your head and heart be the source for your material.
- Think of at least three very good personal reasons for your choice.
- Try out more than one answer. Submit the one you like the best.

Don't:

- Don't choose a topic merely to look good.
- Don't be self-conscious about your choice.

- Don't choose a topic that requires research. Let your experience guide you.

Question: "What would you like to tell us about yourself?"

Do:

- Pick something important—that matters to you.
- Consider explaining anything unusual that has influenced your school or home life.
- Use a style of writing that sounds like you.
- Write the sort of piece—e.g. essay, poem, internal monologue—you've written successfully in the past.

Don't:

- Don't turn down the college's invitation to write more about yourself.
- Don't put on airs to try to impress the college. Be yourself.
- Don't repeat what you've written elsewhere in your application.
- Don't try to use a form or style of writing for the first time unless you have a record of successful writing experiments.
- Don't write the essay, or any part of the application, the night before it's due!!

10 General Writing Tips:

1.) Answer the question
2.) Be Original
3.) Be Yourself
4.) Don't "Thesaurize" Your Composition
5.) Use Imagery and Clear, Vivid Prose
6.) Spend the most time on your introduction
    a. Don't summarize in your introduction.
    b. Create mystery or intrigue in your introduction—appeal to their emotions!
7.) Use Transitions
8.) Conclusions are critical
    a. Expand upon the broader implications of your discussion.
    b. Consider linking your conclusion to your introduction to establish a sense of balance by reiterating introductory phrases.
    c. Redefine a term used previously in your body paragraphs.
    d. End with a famous quote that is relevant to your argument.
    e. Frame your discussion within a larger context or show that your topic has widespread appeal.
    f. Forge some attempt at closure—but life, like your essay, is not always neat and tidy.
9.) Give your draft to others
10.) Revise, Revise, Revise

Writing Your Essay Format:

Follow the "formula" of having a beginning, middle, and end.

Beginning: tell us what you plan to tell; Body: tell us; and Conclusion: tell us what you told.

Introduction: Hook the reader!

Body: Typically three sections. When you can make three statements about a subject, you show that you probably know what you're talking about. Support your main idea or your thesis.

Example:	**Subject:**	"The Struggles within me."
	Point 1:	What do I stand for?
	Point 2:	What should I do with my life?
	Point 3:	How can I communicate with others?

Use transitions to take readers by the hand. They create an easy-to-follow road map of where you are going in your essay. Choose words that set up relationships between one idea and the next. Some examples include the following: also, on the other hand, still, too, consequently, another, similarly, although, in the first place, on the contrary, better still, nevertheless, for instance, this, and yet, --just to name a few!

Conclusion: leave your readers with a "gift" —something to think about, a line to chuckle over, a memorable phrase or quotation. Whatever you give, the farewell gift must fit the content, style, and mood of your essay.

Works Cited: Ehrenhaft, George. Writing a Successful College Application Essay. Barron's Eucational Series, Inc. New York: 1987; EssayEdges' Harvard-Educated Admissions Essay Editors.