WRITING the College Essay

Presented by:
Donna Scully
English teacher
dscully@pobschools.org

Writing
is HARD!

What's In the Guide?

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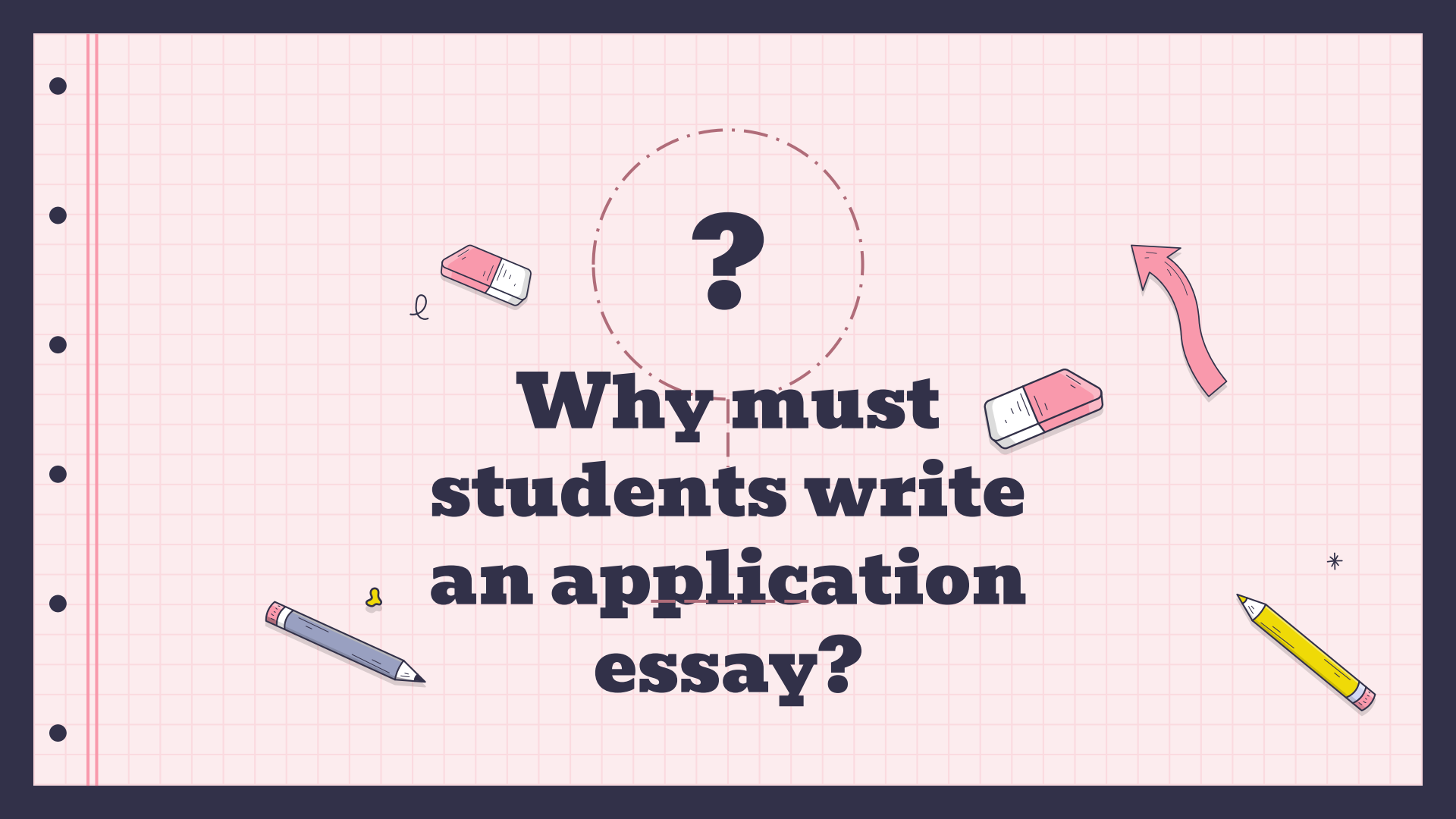
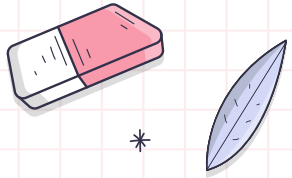

?
Why must students write an application essay?

Admissions Process

Competition to enter colleges is at an all-time high with many applicants having similar "paper" qualifications

- *SAT/ACT scores* *(many schools are requiring again)*
- *GPA*
- *Course loads*
- *Extracurricular activities*

Essays showcase:



01 Individualism

Black and White data can be identical to many other applicants. The essay gives you a chance to be YOU!

02 Writing Skills

Writing well is an acquired skill that can demonstrate your ACADEMIC ability.

03 Thinking

Good writing relies on good thinking and organizational skills. Show off your MIND.

04 Maturity

Using a reflective tone shows self-awareness and maturity--qualities you need to be INDEPENDENT.

On that note…here is a note I received in 2019:

Good Afternoon Ms. Scully,

I recently read your student, (name redacted)'s application to RPI and wanted to reach out to thank you for sharing your recommendation with us. I read many math and science recommendation letters (as that is what we require from students), and it is always refreshing to have someone who teaches English share a different side of a student.

Thank you so much for your insight into (name redacted). I truly appreciate it.

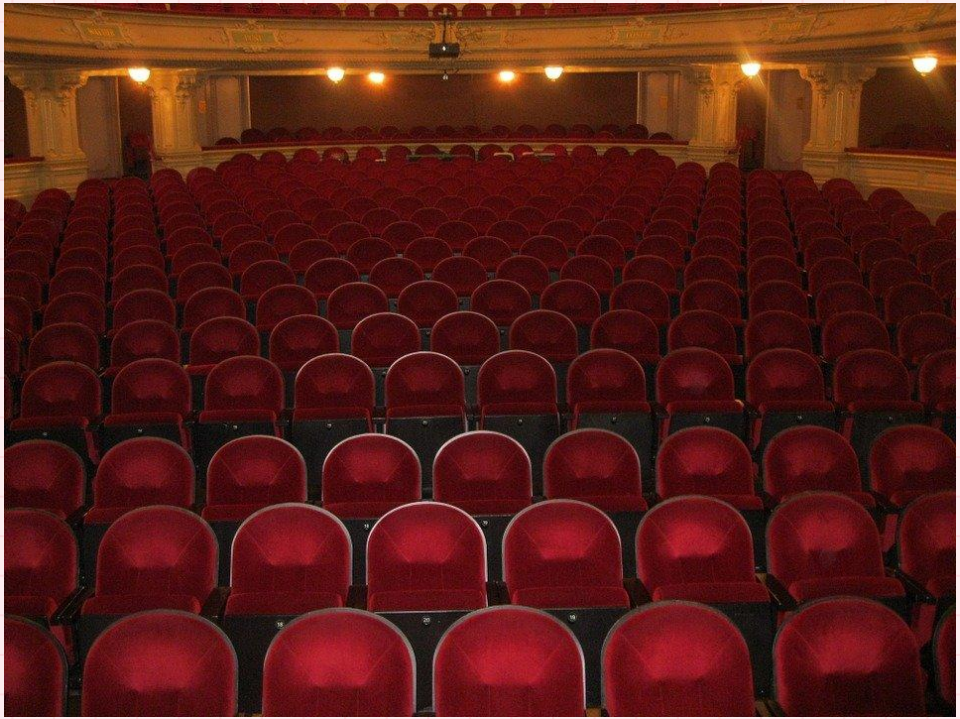
All my best,

(name redacted)

Admissions Counselor, Undergraduate Admissions

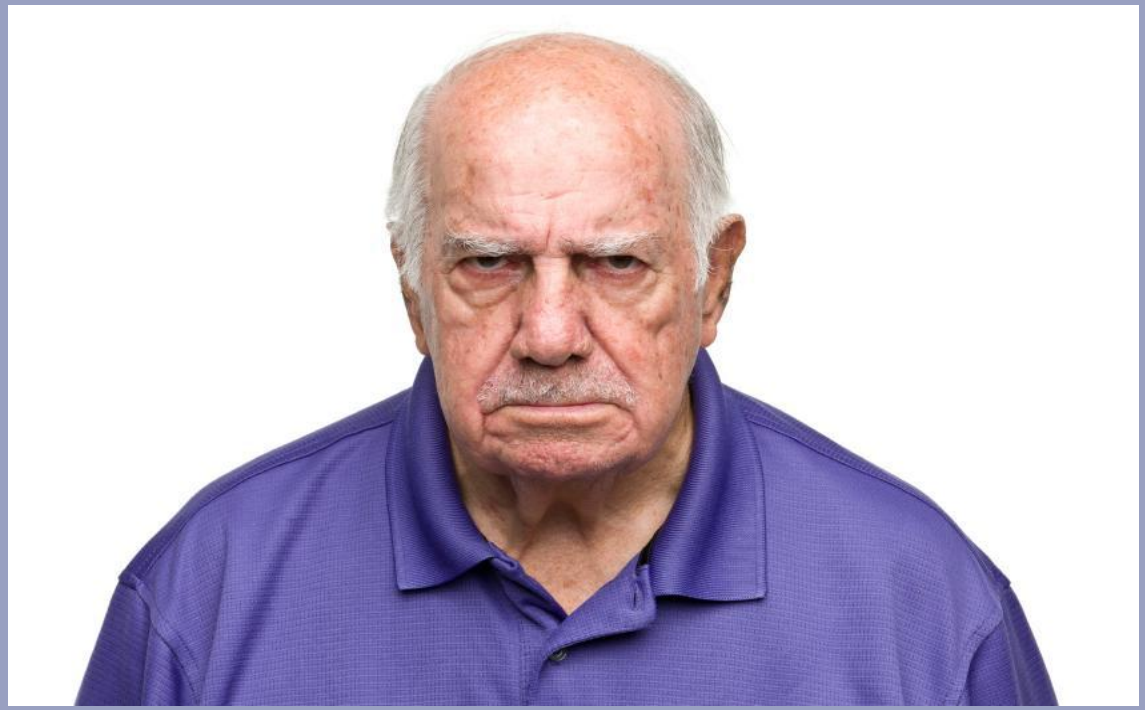
PS – I cried reading (name redacted)'s essay, too.

What type of audience should you imagine?



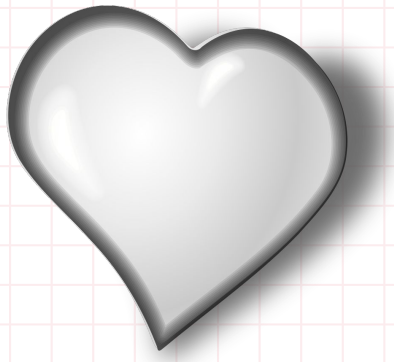
The “Positive Audience”

The “Negative Audience”



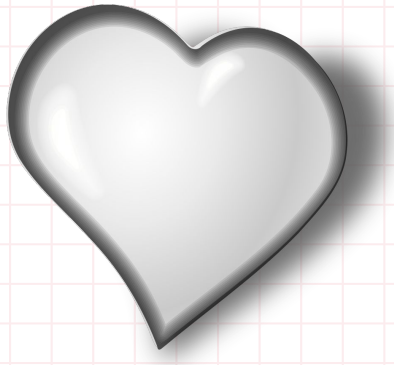
What do college admissions officers love to see?

- **Originality of writing topic**
  - *Less original topics call for more unique presentations of ideas*
  - *Being intellectually adventurous and not overly cautious*



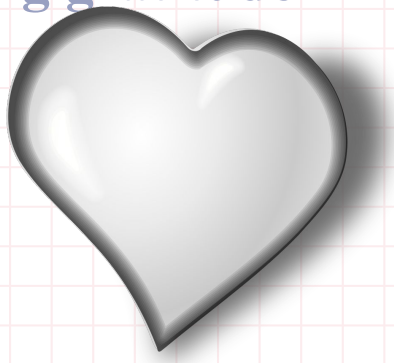
What do college admissions officers love to see?

- It is not just the topic that matters, it's also about <u>how</u> a student writes about it
  - *Reflective mature thought*
  - *Use of language*
  - *Sound writing mechanics*
  - *Engagement - from the onset and then ongoing*



What do college admissions officers love to see?

- Small anecdotes with rich details
  - *"Show, don't tell!"*
- Answering a question in its entirety
- Use of dialogue
- Essays that show a positive attitude and deserving gratitude
- The confession of weakness and error
- Genuine voice of a high school student



What do college admissions officers want you to AVOID?

- A laundry list of extracurricular activities
- Essays that rely too heavily on humor.
  - *Funny essays can be quite effective, but only if there's substance below the cleverness.*
- Superficiality. Students write what they have been doing and keep it fact-based but do not bring it to a reflective level.

What do college admissions officers want you to AVOID?

- **Essays that seem to be written to impress an admissions office**
  They tend to lack authenticity
- **Trite conclusions**
  - *After my experience, I now realize that…*
  - *"We're all fundamentally the same."*
  - *"We're all fundamentally different."*
  - *"I should appreciate my own life."*
- **Essays on "hot topics" that simply restate obvious arguments**

What do many college admissions like for you to AVOID?

- Misspellings, poor grammar, and typographical errors suggest that students may not be putting much effort into their applications
- The use of profanity, even for "effect," may be viewed as reflecting poor judgment
- Divisive Ideological issues such as politics and religion
  - *The "Thanksgiving Table Rule"*

What do many college admissions like for you to AVOID?

- Ingratitude falls flat
- Overcoming adversity with grace is great, but sometimes telling of a horrific case leaves the committee hanging
- Forced creativity, forced humor, and self-consciously trying to be different

Where Are We Right Now?

It's important that you START EARLY. Drafting and revising take time and patience!

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

When Should You Sart?

Consider it a living document. Begin and revisit often.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

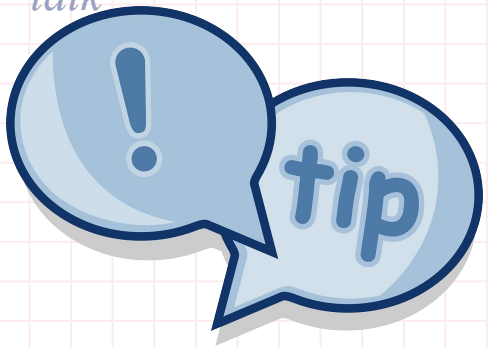
When Should You Finish?

It's important that you START EARLY. Drafting and revising take time and patience!

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

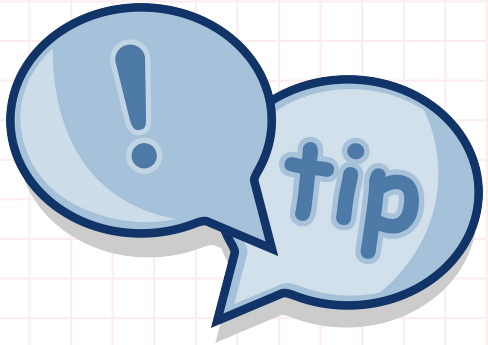
Tips for Writing

- **Start early!**
- **Write a draft and then set it aside for a few days before attempting to proofread or revise.**
- **Don't "thesaurize" your essay either. Loading your essay with SAT words makes it sound unnatural.**
- **Show, don't tell!**
  - *Narratives "work" better than lists, especially for questions that ask you to "tell about yourself" or to "talk about someone who has influenced you."*
  - **Keep your audience in mind with the knowledge that admissions officers are spending about two to three minutes on your essay.**



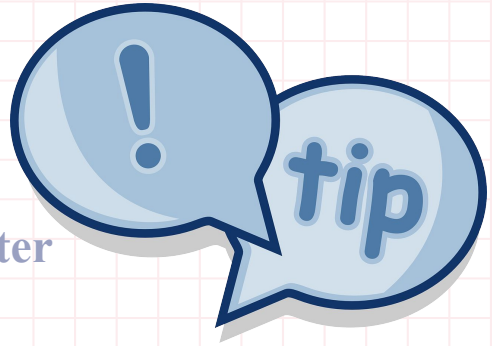
- **REVISE!**
  - *Revision is not the same thing as proofreading.*
  - *Revision literally means "seeing again"—you should make big changes. (See Tips for Revision)*
- **PROOFREAD!**

Your essay should be as technically perfect as possible.

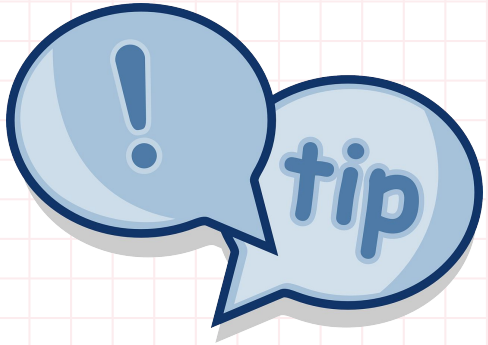


Tips for Revision

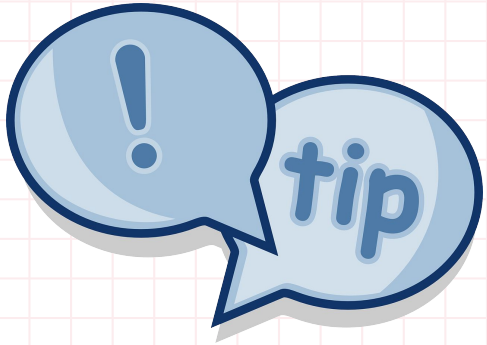
- Spend quality revision time trying out different “hooks” to gain your reader’s interest.
  - *Rhetorical questions, dictionary definitions, and famous quotations can work, but keep in mind that many people use these techniques. Your goal is stand out from the crowd.*
- Be as personal and concrete as you can.
  - *Narratives and specific examples work best.*
    - Are you writing about your trip to Great Adventure *or* your feelings about overcoming your fear of heights by going on a roller coaster for the first time?



- **Use vivid, active verbs as often as possible.**
  - *Try to get rid of most of your "to be" verbs: is, are, am, was, were, etc.*
- **Replace bland nouns with specific nouns.**
  - *For example, trade "shoes" for "lime green Nikes" or "lunch" with "half-smushed peanut butter and jelly sandwich".*
- **Beware of ambiguous pronouns.**
  - *Every pronoun you use should have a clear referent.*
  - *Be especially aware of "it," "this," and "that," which can often be vague or confusing.*



- **Vary your sentence length and sentence structure.**
  - ***Intersperse short declarative sentences with longer complex and compound sentences.***
  - ***Notice and revise repetitive sentence structures such as subject-verb-object.***
  - ***Avoid using "I" over and over again as the first word of sentences.***
- **Check for redundancy. And you should check for redundancy. ☺**
  - ***Don't use two adjectives in a series that mean the same thing as in "gorgeous, beautiful" or an unnecessary adjective in front of a noun or verb as in "fast sprint."***
  - ***When in doubt, choose a vivid verb or specific noun over an adjective or adverb.***
- **Write everything you can think of.**
  - ***Don't just stop writing when you reach the word limit or get tired. You can always prune later.***



- **Conclusions are very important!**
  - ***Make your last sentence count. A stand-alone sentence can sometimes be the most effective concluding paragraph.***
  - ***Don't summarize or repeat information; the essay is short enough that the reader will not have forgotten any details.***
- **DO NOT rely on spell check to catch errors.**
  - ***Spell check only notices when a word is spelled incorrectly, not when you have used the wrong word in a given circumstance. There, their, and they're and other common usage problems will not be corrected.***
    Likewise, you may not catch typos like "form" instead of "from".
- **Reading your essay aloud can help you catch these as can showing it to someone else. A second set of eyes can be invaluable!**

Who should help you?

- You should help yourself.
  - *That said, don't go for help to anyone until you have read through the packet and sketched out some ideas IN WRITING at the very least.*
  - *Use Appendix 3 — the Self Evaluation Form section included in the packet.*
- If you are still only at the idea phase (I just can't think of anything to write...), try talking to your friends, parents, siblings, present and former teachers, coaches, and administrators.
- If you have drafted an essay, you might want a parent, older sibling, friend, your CURRENT English teacher, or a former English teacher to read it over and offer suggestions.
  - *The first draft is NOT the time to edit; it is the time to revise. See the Glossary of Terms for an explanation.*

Who should help you?

Your CURRENT English teacher can be a powerful resource in the writing of your college essay, but remember: this is your application process, not their application essay.

Your English teacher has a caseload of students who need him or her for remediation during 10th period. This is why you should…

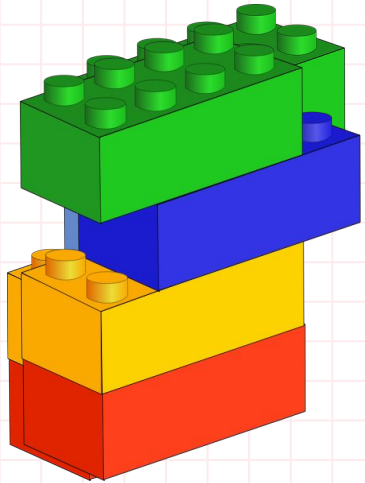
Ask your teacher if they can help you, and

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT and keep it.

Your teacher is not responsible for proofreading and editing your paper—that is your job. According to Randy Cohen (The Ethicist/NY Times Magazine), "A teacher may read students essays but not write them" and should "...eschew anything as hands-on as editing or proofreading..."

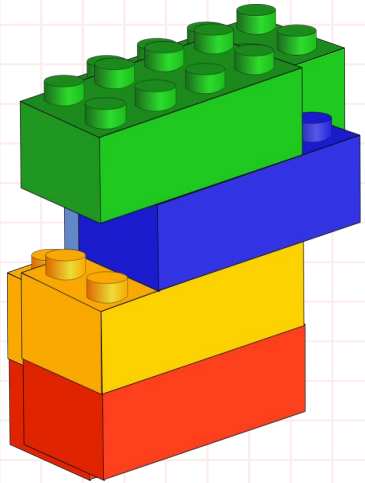
Structure of Essay

- There is no single structure that works best. This will depend a lot on the question you are answering and on your own writing style.
- A traditional five-paragraph essay may work just fine for an issue-based question.
- A narrative describing a significant experience may include more short paragraphs and dialogue.



Structure of Essay

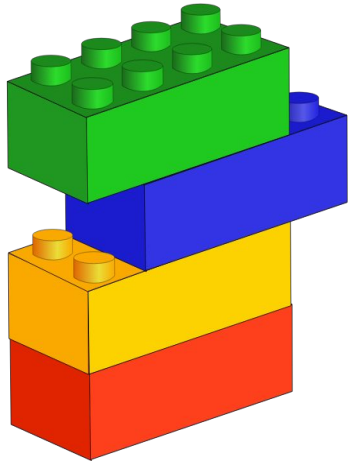
- The essay needs to follow a logical progression, must flow, and must stay focused on answering the question at hand.
- No matter what style you write in, you need to introduce your topic, develop it with concrete details, and reflect on it in a conclusion.



Sequencing of a Narrative

- Traditionally, many students write their narrative in a chronologically sequential "linear" manner:
  - *I was a camp counselor last summer.*
  - *I had a problematic camper that I needed to work with.*
  - *Together, we made great strides over the summer.*
  - *By the end of the summer, the camper became a team player.*
  - *I learned as much from him as he learned from me.*
- Many students have had very successful revisions by reordering their narrative.
  - *Classically, the essay can begin with "the end" of the story and work its way back. This also allows for a full-circle ending, a great way to frame your essay.*

***Please, please, PLEASE* DO NOT WRITE ABOUT CAMP!**



Don’t lose sight of your focus (subject)!

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Welcome to Syracuse, Grandma!

Don’t lose sight of your focus (*negative experience*)!

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Write Positively About Something Negative:

- *Are you the kid who used to, or who is known to be, the crayon eater during kindergarten?*
- *Pain and tragedy can reveal character in a "show, don't tell" way.*
- *Don't make the thrust of such an essay the pain of the experience, but the insights gained as a result.*

Idea Generation

- **Where will my ideas come from?**
  - *Dig out those old photo albums, diaries, and journals to help refresh your memory about seminal events in your life.*
- **Outside the Box:**
  - *The standard college essay questions can, within reason, be refined by you to become uniquely personal.*
    - Sometimes we don't think to use stories of our pets, or even an inanimate object such as a "blankie" because we are afraid to seem immature or silly. As a young adult, you now have the perspective to see your own growth from these early childhood experiences—this can be very revealing of who you are now.

Idea Generation

- I Have Writer's Block...
- If you have an idea about what you want to write about, but can't think of a way to start writing it, grab a recording device and a close friend or family member who remembers the incident and tell that person about the event.
- Make sure before you begin recording that the person is prepared to ask probing questions about the event:
  - *Who else was involved?*
  - *What was the worst/best aspect of the event?*
  - *How did that make you feel?*
  - *What did you learn?*
  - *If you had it to do all over again, what would you do differently?*
- Listen to the recording and transcribe some or all of what was discussed.

The Common App

Word Count

650

Common Application Essay Topics

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.

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?

3. Reflect on a time when you *questioned* or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your *thinking*? What *was the outcome*?

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?**

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or *realization* that *sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.*

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?

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.

Sample Essay 1

Notice the following as we read the essay:

Informal tone

In-Process thinking

Vivid descriptions

Running theme(s)

I don’t have the best memory. I spend a large chunk of my time looking back at old photographs to feel more connected to my past. Whether it’s a photo of myself from this summer, smiling brightly on a banana-yellow kayak, or a photo of me in a loud red ladybug costume in 2009, I remember my life as the girl with bouncing red hair clearly as I flip through my dusty photo album.

The color red has come to mean a lot to me in my life, starting with how my life began. Red makes me think of mothers. My birth mother had bright red hair, the same color as my mother and her sisters. Her red hair is what connects me to my family. My birth mother knew that commonality would tie us together, like a perfect package. Some people don't even believe I'm adopted since I look and act just like my mother--though at times I don't consider that a compliment. My mother and I have many similarities: we're strong, loud and assertive women. She has the same red hair that ties the women of our side of the family together, though hers is a deeper red. She's as stubborn as the deep red dye in her hair, and sometimes I love that about her. I appreciate her stubbornness when it comes to getting into a class I wanted, but not so much when she goes to the front desk at Target to complain about not getting 96 cents off of a tube of toothpaste. With her dark red curls and a voice as earthquake-inducing as mine, it's no wonder people don't believe that she isn't my biological mother.

The jokes started in middle school, when everyone started calling me a leprechaun or a ginger. I would shake my head and deny, defending my own individuality with the sharpness of a thousand swords. I always insisted, *my hair is brown, not red!* In retrospect, I'm not even sure why I got so defensive. I guess I always craved a sense of normalcy, a quiet away from the loudness of the women in my family. Including myself.

As I entered high school, my opinion of my hair color began to change. In an uncertain world like this one, you try to cling to every connection you can form with the recurring characters in your life. I came to love the hints of red in my hair, the fire in my words when I feel as if I'd been wronged, and the stubbornness I'd always reluctantly shared with my mother. Now, I embrace the fact that I am a strong leader; and that my power and fearlessness are traits I should be proud of, like my mother is of me. I've spent much of my life creating a personality for myself, something other than the 'fiery redhead' persona I've often been labeled as. I bathe myself in my Outremer Vanille perfume and candles, an unmistakable scent whenever I walk into a room. I wear jewel blue, round shaped acrylics, and a nearly constant smile on my face. I'm loud and assertive, creative and loving. I will always have these things that make me who I am, the things you don't see in photographs.

I always claimed that my hair isn't as red as it seemed in my childhood photos, whether it's my little ladybug photo or otherwise, but the fire of my personality does seem to perfectly match the red hair of "both" my mothers. I've come to terms with the difference between being associated with the color of my hair, and being associated with the powerful women of my family, the women who taught me to also be creative, kind, and loving as I am. I pick up the phone. *Hello, Sheryl James Salon!* I make an appointment for a Wednesday afternoon, and I dye my hair copper red.

Florida State University

Sample 2

In this essay, look for:

Bringing 2 concepts together

Personal touches

Active reflection

The use of definitions

Since age 3, I have been performing. I started out taking Indian Classical Vocal and Harmonium classes. I discovered my love for performing while also learning Hindi, connecting to my culture. I sat at my chestnut colored dining table, translating lyrics with my grandma. Music pulled me in, filled me with an indescribable joy and desire for more. I performed in musicals, joined choirs, took acting classes, joined a-cappella groups, did anything and everything I could do to feel the sense of exhilaration I felt onstage. I spent my free time singing along to bhajans (Indian classical songs) my dad would play on his coffee-colored acoustic guitar, which I affectionately named ‘प्रसन्ना’, after an Indian musician who plays the same guitar. As I grew older, my passion for performing stayed unwaveringly strong. In hindsight, it should have been clear all along that dedicating the rest of my life to performance was the right choice for me, the only *real* choice for me. What I didn't realize at first was that what my performance could do for others was just as important, if not more so, than what performing was doing for me.

Merriam-Webster defines ‘leukemia’ as: an acute or chronic disease in humans and other warm-blooded animals characterized by an abnormal increase in the number of white blood cells in the tissues and often in the blood.

I came to know this definition when I was 13 years old. My grandpa fell sick with a rare form of leukemia. I watched him lose his ability to speak, communicating by using his shaky hand to write in a tattered notebook. During this time, I saw the tireless work strangers would put in to try and save my grandpa’s life. Nurses, doctors, aids, countless altruistic souls woke up every morning and dedicated their lives to saving my grandpa, other people’s grandparents and parents and children and grandchildren. I don't need to know the Merriam-Webster definition of selflessness; these people *were* the definition. There were truly selfless people in the world, people choosing to spend their days improving the lives of others and…I was not one of them. I wanted to perform, but *why*? Because it made *me* happy? Did I ever bother to think beyond myself? I knew the word that described that behavior; it was the opposite of selfless.

I felt this way all throughout high school. The feeling that I was selfish enveloped me. That is, until the summer going into my junior year of high school. I was selected to sing with the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra (MYO) Tour Choir. I traveled to Italy with MYO that summer, and it changed my life. Our audiences were complete strangers, people who had come to see us sing not because they were related to us, but because they *wanted* to. Tour performances opened my eyes to the impact of performance. We sang a slow, emotion-filled Hebrew wedding song, and I watched a woman in Florence cry as she heard us sing her wedding song.We sang a well known Italian freedom-fighter song, and watched as toddlers stopped crying just long enough to recognize the melody and sing along. In their eyes I saw the impact of selflessness, mirroring the eyes of my grandpa around those trying to save him. I learned the power of performance, how my passion allows me to crash through language barriers and touch the lives of others.

Throughout my life, performing has been what gives me purpose, but I now know my purpose is not to pursue this path only because of what it does for me. I want to spend my life using what makes me happiest to make a difference in the world, to connect with others and to help people as much as I can. I want to embody the word ‘selfless’, and performing has given me a pathway to do just that.

Northwestern University

In this essay, look for:

Unique structure

Extended Metaphor

Showcasing Qualities

Clarity of Prose

How to Balance on a SurfBoard

1. **Position your body in the middle of the board**
2. **Use both hands to push yourself onto your feet**
3. **Keep your knees bent and toes perpendicular to the wave**

Six summers ago, my father taught me how to surf. He swam by my side, pushed me into waves while shouting “Paddle, paddle, paddle!” and “Just go for it!” The approaching waves always seemed to drown my father’s voice out. I would focus heavily on standing up on my board. When the wave crashed, I struggled to keep my feet on the board. The hardest part about surfing was mastering the ”pop up.” It seemed that no matter how hard I tried to balance, I always found myself underwater as the wave moved on without me.

After years of riding many waves to shore, I learned how to stand on my board but there was additional advice that was key to helping me balance.

My Ultimate Guide to Balancing on a SurfBoard

1. **Have Self-Confidence**

Believing in myself gives me strength while riding waves. The first time I stood up on my board, my dad laughed and said, “I knew you could do that this whole time… I could push you into a wave, but you had to give yourself a push.”

As I have taken on more challenges, I have learned to give myself that “push.” When I was younger, I used to be very shy. I was easily intimidated by my peers who I thought were “better” than me. Over time, I started believing in myself and people began to respect me more. My self confidence has helped me with presentations, interviews and meeting new people. Feeling confident has also made me a stronger volleyball player and teammate. I have learned to become comfortable with pushing myself into new situations.

2. Have a Growth Mindset

When I started surfing, I made excuses for not riding the big waves. After letting many waves pass me by, I no longer let myself miss out on opportunities. Now, an intimidating wave is a challenge I welcome.

Despite how many times I have splashed into the water, I find a way to lift myself up and try again. I have learned to look for the good in situations when things don’t go as planned. Evolving from my mistakes in the classroom and on the court has shaped me to become a stronger version of myself.

3. Be present

While surfing, I found myself looking into the distance thinking about how big the waves appeared. Sometimes, I realized I had a tendency to worry about future events such as a presentation at the end of the day or a big volleyball game instead of paying attention to what I was currently doing.

Whether it's surfing or working towards achieving a new goal, I try to focus on the wave or task at hand. By doing this, my mind is not overwhelmed and I can balance my thoughts. Although I can’t control what the waves are going to do in the future, I can control my response. Learning to manage what I can has helped me succeed and stay focused on my academic, social and athletic goals.

Surfing has taught me that it is better to try and ride a wave than to let it go by. Life has so much to offer and taking steps out of my comfort zone enables me to take advantage of many opportunities. Sometimes the waves can be rough but believing in myself has enabled me to become a stronger version of myself. When I tackle a big wave or a difficult situation, I remind myself of my father's advice to "Just go for it."

UCONN

In the next 2 essays, look for:

Exceptional Style

tone, sophistication, word choice

Unique Topics

small moments=big revelations

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

A single spotlight radiates down on the empty stage, slightly reaching the tips of my fingers as they cling onto the barricade placed before me. The hundreds of bodies surrounding me are nothing more than a few old friends—we've reconnected over a common interest. Before we have time to fill each other in on the past few years, a familiar saxophone solo captivates the room. A single clap turns into a roar of cheers as the anticipated act gracefully makes her way onto the stage, with that same lone spotlight now gleaming on her. The wave of cheers flushes every thought out of my mind, yet I know a tsunami is going to hit as soon as the house lights are turned back on. It's on the barricades of these New York City venues that I don't dwell on the past and future, I'm truly present in my thoughts—I'm living in the moment.

Halfway through the set and my favorite song fills the room, causing a catharsis I should've expected. Everything that has built up inside me is released as I cry out my favorite lyrics. My fixation on the performance in front of me blurs the image of the crowd around me—I'm reminded of their existence as they sing along with as much emotion as I do, as if the lyrics have become a plea for help. A feeling of intimacy is created in the sea of people that I can't even see the end of. I'm lost and don't want to be found.

The X’s on my hand provide me with a feeling of power, rather than the defeat that comes with the X’s on my tests. Nothing can bring me down. The swaying of bodies to the mesmerizing beats invites me in, rather than pushing me away as the abundance of careless bodies in the school hallway do. I’m able to let loose. The sound of off-key voices singing along becomes the most beautiful choir begging me to be their newest member, rather than being just another student in the perfectly in-tune group that I’m a part of each day. It’s okay if I’m not perfect. The diverse crowd around me only smiles at me, rather than glaring at me for not being a clone of the stereotypical Long Island girl I’m expected to be. They accept me for who I am.

Nothing compares to the euphoria I feel when squished in a crowd while hearing the songs that mean the most to me in their rawest form. At the end of the night my cheeks throb from the smile that never left my face, even more than my legs or ears do. I'm just that happy. There's sweat dripping down my face, my makeup smeared, and yet I feel more beautiful than ever. It's as if I'm in my own Garden of Eden, my own paradise on earth. Yet as soon as the last chord is played the temptation takes over, I allow all worries to take over me again.

On ordinary days, stress consumes me like a vacuum sucking up the remnants of confetti that fell during the encore. I'm constantly concentrated on a fear of the future, as well as being haunted by the past, yet in those few hours of live music blasting through a mediocre sound system it's as if I'm born again—pure, and not yet affected by the troubles of the world. These late nights are the best medicine, curing me of the everyday stresses. It's here that I'm my present self, my best self, not consumed with anxious thoughts. I'm the most "me" I'll ever be.

"Life is made of small moments like these." -Above & Beyond

OHIO STATE

The set up...

Dig the trenches, build the moats, construct walls and palisades by the bucket. Lay out the castle and towers and raise the flag proudly from every point. Don't forget the seashell decorations. The people of the land stand on a hill and admire the pride of the nation—a monument for eternity—or at least the next big wave. In the little flipped-over boat under the boardwalk, we knew we had built a magical kingdom just like Prince Caspian's, where he had defended his mighty castle. What we didn't know was that it was a world no one over four feet tall would be able to appreciate in the same way, and that chaos had erupted on the boardwalk above. It turns out that perspective is everything.

For my whole life, Friday summer nights meant beach nights. My mom, her friend, and seven kids trekked to the ocean. Our parade of coolers, chairs, buckets, boogie boards and shovels was a sight to behold. Although the youngest of the troop, I happened to be the specialist at digging, jumping waves, and collecting shells. Much to my mother's dismay I also happened to be Houdini in training.

The anecdote...

One Friday after a long, hard day of riding waves, it was time to head home. Seven kids were charged with rinsing toys, finding flip flops, and lugging stuff back through what seemed like miles of sand. We always walked in a line, my friend's mom the leader, my mom the caboose. "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven" counted and recounted, and we were ready to go. We trudged toward the boardwalk. Our moms glanced at us every few seconds as they hauled most of the items, which were somehow heavier on the way back. We finally reached the boardwalk. "One, two, three, four, five, six…" My mom turned around. "Where's Matthew?" But I was gone.

Westhampton Beach was the place to be: boardwalk packed, lobster sizzling, and the band loud and strong. My mom shouted my name but heard no reply. Six kids stood by the stairs with special instructions: “DO NOT MOVE.” Two moms frantically ran about. From the boardwalk, bathrooms, shore, showers, and restaurants they yelled my name. Finally, I reappeared, confused by the chaos at the top of the stairs and everyone’s strange questions. No, I was not lost, kidnapped, or Houdini. When we reached the boardwalk, everyone else had hurried up the stairs, but I went under. You might ask how they missed that, but when you’re under four feet tall, you see a whole different world. Kids were scurrying under a capsized boat under the boardwalk. I had no choice but to investigate. They were constructing a castle, and as the expert, it was my duty to supervise. None of my siblings, friends, or adults knew that underneath existed.

The reflection...

This adventure is one of my favorite memories, and as I've grown older (and taller) it has evolved from a story about the time I nearly scared everyone to death to one about how people see (or don't see) what's right in front of them. For most of my life, I looked back at this experience as a funny story; I was unable to see how others may have felt in the situation. Just as my mom was unable to see where my four foot self would go on an adventure, I was unable to comprehend what I had put her through. Our actions and reactions to events are contingent on the perspective from which we view them; empathy is integral in making sound and socially conscious decisions. My sense of empathy and emphasis on socially conscious decision making is derived from my determination to understand and internalize the core beliefs and ideologies of people I observe in life, which is a value that has allowed me to become a more effective communicator, leader and advocate. After all, perspective is everything.

Impressive?

A word about AI...

A couple of takeaways from a recent article in the Washington Post:

“Computer science and college admissions experts say that AI-created essays have some easy tells — helpful for admissions officers who are prepping for an uptick in ChatGPT-written essays.”

“But more importantly, admissions essays are a unique type of writing, [a former Harvard academic advisor] said. They require students to reflect on their life and craft their experiences into a compelling narrative that quickly provides college admissions counselors with a sense of why that person is unique.

“ChatGPT is not there,” he said.

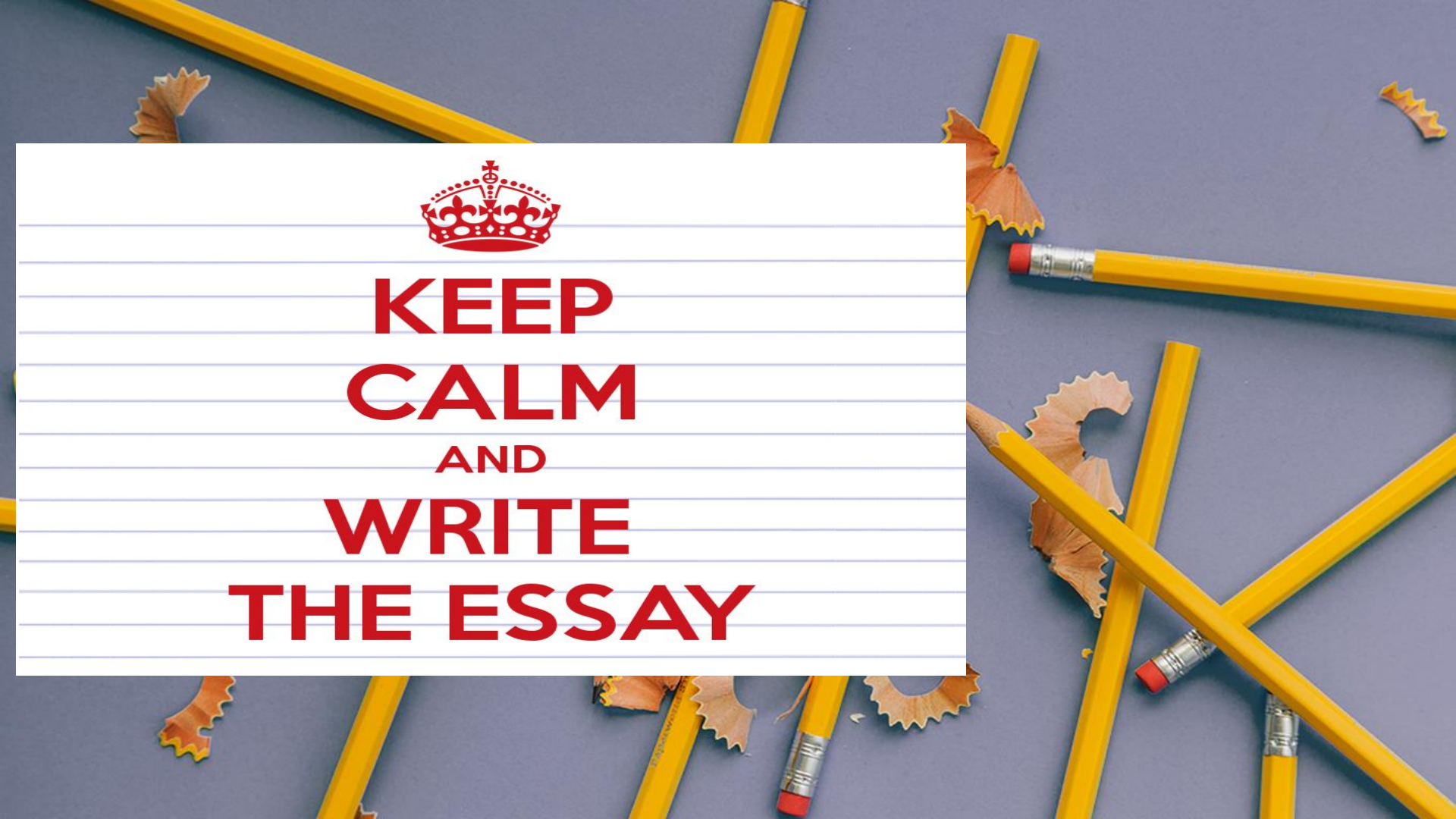
Some Dos and Don'ts

- **DO** use your own "voice," especially when writing your personal statement.
- **DO** write about something that you care about, something that gives us a window into your perspective / experience.
- **DO** take some calculated risks in your essay, and really show your personality.
- **DO** use a reflective tone; go beyond the surface.

- **DON'T** pack in as many SAT-prep words as possible!
- **DON'T** write a laundry list of extracurricular activities—this information is already in the Common Application.
- **DON'T** use slang or otherwise inappropriate language!
- **DON'T** overdo humor!
- **DON'T** forget to proofread for misspellings, punctuation, and usage errors.

Last Words of Advice:

- Take your time THINKING about your essay before you actually start WRITING your essay.
- A good topic (one that you care about) can make all of the difference. You must be passionate and reflective. Note: you may have to look in unusual places. Try memory books, photo albums, your daily routine, etc.
- Proof~~reid~~, proof~~reed~~; proofread!
- Don't be afraid to CUT words, phrases, sentences, and even paragraphs. Longer does not equal better! More precise equals better!
- Remember the PURPOSE of the essay is to make you stand out as an individual, and not just be another Social Security number. BE YOURSELF!
- Don't be afraid to get started. Putting fingertip to keyboard is a necessary, albeit scary, step. Just like a cold pool, it is best to JUMP IN!


KEEP
CALM
AND
WRITE
THE ESSAY

THANKS!

Do you have any questions?

dscully@pobschools.org
(516) 434-3186
English teacher
POB JK HS

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