

Attention, students & parents

Help VSAC serve you better!

Join the VSAC Feedback Community

From time to time, VSAC will reach out, usually by email, to invite you to participate in surveys, focus groups, and other feedback forums on different topics. You pick the ones you care most about. And you're never under obligation to participate.

Sign up at vsac.org/feedback



Writing the Admissions Essay

by Max McAuley, Associate Director of Admissions

Landmark College. 3-7-2024.

College&CareerPathways2024

Overview

- **Importance of a Strong College Essay**
- **Common Characteristics of an Effective College Essay**
- **Breaking Down the Parts of a College Essay**
- **Scoring Your Essay**
- **Possible Subjects and Getting Started on Your Essay**
- **Conclusion**

Importance of a Strong College Essay

- **Understanding the holistic application review process.**
- **Why do we need a college essay?**
- **What is the essay's role in your application?**

Common Characteristics of an Effective College Essay

- **What do you believe colleges are looking for?**
- **Should your essay be customized?**

Breaking Down the Parts of a College Essay

- **What parts should your essay consist of?**
- **What rules do you know that are important for being a good writer?**

Scoring Your Essay

- **5. An exceptional essay:**
 - presents an engaging and vivid story or stories linked by an insightful idea. The story acts as a metaphor or analogy for a larger issue or the author uses the story to reflect on an important question about human nature. The introduction and title grab the reader's attention, the vivid details maintain the reader's attention and the conclusion contains a surprising or novel analysis that makes the reader rethink his or her assumptions. The overall organization, paragraphs, sentences, word choice and mechanics enhance the meaning.
- **4. A good essay:**
 - presents an engaging story or stories linked by a distinctive idea. The author uses the story to reflect on an important question about human nature. The introduction and/or title pull in the reader's attention, the details maintain the reader's attention and the conclusion makes the reader reflect on his or her own experiences. The overall organization, paragraphs, sentences, word choice and mechanics are coherent with few errors.

Scoring Your Essay

- **3. An average essay**
 - **presents an intelligible story or stories that may be missing some information. The stories lack a clear linking idea, but comes close to having a cohesive theme. The author attempts to or does not use the story to reflect on an important question about his or her own life. The introduction or title establish the focus, but some of the supporting details are undeveloped or are numerous but not always pertinent, and the conclusion attempts to wrap up what is learned by the writer. While errors are few, some errors in the overall organization, paragraphs, sentences, word choice and mechanics distract somewhat from the meaning.**

Scoring Your Essay

- **2. A below-average essay**
 - presents an unintelligible story or stories that is missing some information. The stories lack a clear linking idea. The author attempts to or does not use the story to reflect on an important question about his or her own life. The introduction or title fail to establish the focus, the supporting details are undeveloped or are numerous but not always pertinent and the conclusion attempts to wrap up what is learned by the writer. Many errors in the overall organization, paragraphs, sentences, word choice and mechanics distract from the meaning.
- **1. A weak essay**
 - presents no coherent story or stories. It lacks an idea to hold the pieces together. The introduction or title does not tell the reader the focus, supporting details are missing or unclear and the conclusion is confusing. Errors in the overall organization, paragraphs, sentences, word choice and mechanics interfere with the meaning. A poor personal essay is unclear, undeveloped, disorganized, confusing, lacks detail and riddled with errors.

Possible Subjects and Getting Started on Your Essay

- **What should schools know about you?**
- **Finding YOUR story**
 - Who is the protagonist in your story?
 - Finding a unique moment in your life.

Possible Subjects and Getting Started on Your Essay

- **Use the intro to hook the reader**
- **How does it end?**

In Conclusion....

- **Remember to edit!**
- **You are shaping the “brand” that colleges see**
- **Your essay can make all the difference in your application**