**8 Tips for Crafting Your Best College Essay**

**1. Get started by brainstorming**

Starting the essay can be the hardest part. Brainstorming about your personality traits and defining your strengths is a good place to begin.

**2. Let your first draft flow**

After you've gathered your notes, create an outline to organize your essay and decide where you want examples to appear. Now you're ready to write your first draft. Don't worry about making it perfect. Just get your ideas flowing and your thoughts down on paper. You'll fix mistakes and improve the writing in later drafts

**3. Develop three essay parts**

* Introduction: One paragraph that introduces your essay.
* Body: Several paragraphs explaining the main idea with examples.
* Conclusion: One paragraph that summarizes and ends the essay.

**4. Be specific**

Give your essay focus by figuring out how the question relates to your personal qualities and then taking a specific angle. Make sure everything you write supports that viewpoint.

**5. Find a creative angle**

Katherine, a college freshman, had to describe why she would make a good Reed College student for that school's essay. "I am a huge fan of Beat Generation writers, and many of the West Coast Beat writers attended Reed," she says. "So, I related my love for writing and the Beats to why I would be a great fit for the school."

**6. Be honest**

The essay question might ask you about your best quality, an experience that shaped you or the reason you want to attend a certain college. Don't be tempted to write what you think the admission officers want to hear; answer the question honestly.

**7. Get feedback**

Show your draft to family, friends or teachers. Ask if it makes sense and sounds like you. Consider their feedback and make changes, but keep your voice. High school senior Dana warns, "Make sure the essay is in your own voice. If at some point you read over your essay and you hear your mother's voice, something is wrong."

**8. Proofread and make corrections**

Read your essay over carefully to check for typos and spelling and grammar errors. It's best to ask someone who hasn't seen it yet to take a look as well. They're likely to see mistakes you won't catch.

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