



NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

CHARACTER • COMPASSION • CONFIDENCE

College Essay Summer Assignment, Summer 2025

Traditional College Essay

Colleges are looking for a traditional college essay, one that responds to the prompts on the Common App. This is a three-step process of Brainstorming, Reading, and Writing a Rough Draft. Each step will be graded on completion. **Steps 1, 2, and 3 are due on the first day of class.**

Step 1 - Brainstorming

Answer the 17 Survey Questions on a Google Doc. They'll help you think of your experiences and begin to formulate stories that you can tell to show who you are, beyond the information provided on the application.

1 page minimum. 25 points

Survey Questions

1. The academic area in which I do best is...
2. My extra-curricular activities (within school) are...
3. My out-of-school activities are (this includes jobs)...
4. The type of college or university I am looking for is...
5. My friends describe me as...
6. My family describes me as...
7. The people I respect or admire the most are those who...
8. Qualities I don't like are...
9. My best quality is my ability to...
10. The area of my life I would like to improve is...
11. The place where I'm happiest is...
12. A big risk I once took was...
13. The worst mistake I ever made was...
14. The single event that had the greatest impact on my life, either positively or negatively, is...
15. My favorite literary, movie, television, or other fictional character is...
16. If I could change one thing about the world (locally, regionally, nationally, globally) it would be...
17. If you could have dinner with one person, living or dead, historical or fictional or

otherwise, who would it be and why?

Step 2 - Reading

Read the linked articles on writing a good college essay. Write a paragraph about why and how ONE of them was helpful to you.

- [How to Write a College Essay](#)
- [Crafting an Unforgettable College Essay](#)
- [How to Conquer the Admissions Essay](#)

Read some of the sample student essays at [140 College Essay Examples](#). Choose one, and write a paragraph about why and how it was helpful to you.

2 complete paragraphs (one for an article, one for a student essay). 25 points

Step 3 - Rough Draft

Write a rough draft that responds to one of the Common Application Essay Prompts below. 500-1,000 words (final draft will be edited to 650) - 50 points

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.

Helpful Suggestions

- Rough drafts need not be perfect - they will be rewritten during the first month of school.
- College essay is a conversation between you and the admissions officials.

- It's not the 5 paragraph format - feel free to free write
- It's a chance for you to add a personal element to their application
- You shouldn't repeat information that's already available on their application (grades, list of activities)
- It's a chance for colleges to see how well you write (crafting and polishing the piece will happen later, towards the end)

Rubric for the Rough Draft:

Word Count 500-1,000 words	10 points
MLA Format	10 points
Paragraphing (can't be just one big paragraph)	10 points
Spelling and Grammar Checked	10 points
Posted to Turnitin.com (to verify as own work)	10 points