

# THE COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAY

1. There are few opportunities at this time to change the data in your application.
  - Your grades are fixed, and first quarter senior year will not change that dramatically;
  - Your board scores will not rise or fall THAT dramatically, no matter how many times you take them;
  - Your teacher and college counselor recommendations are out of your hands.
2. The single place where you still exercise some substantial control is your college application essay, and it represents an opportunity you should **not** take lightly.
3. Most private colleges and universities require at least one essay; some of the more competitive state universities – Michigan, Colorado, Texas, Washington – are now requiring essays.
4. If a school indicates that an essay is optional, don't consider it optional; write one.
5. Check each application for the topic/topics it specifies and the number of essays each requires.
6. Pay close attention to the topic; while many fall into a "personal experience" or "personal statement" response, others will ask you to address everything from "Why do you want to go to our school?" to "Do something creative with this 8 ½ x 11 inch space."
7. Write several drafts; the key to a successful application essay is – as with all sound writing – **revision**; write an engaging story about yourself, keep the focus narrow, and, above all, understand that the readers want to learn something about you from the essay, something that is helpful in understanding **who you are today**.
8. Try to keep the essay to one page; readers rarely turn to a second page. If you must use a second page, make sure the break is in the MIDDLE of a very interesting sentence in your narrative.
9. Have competent readers review the essay so that it "sounds like you." Choose your readers wisely.
10. When you hand it to a reader, especially a teacher or another adult, make sure you indicate
  - The topic
  - The college or university to which it will be sentThese factors influence the approach you might take and the product you write.
11. Give the small paragraph responses some attention; do not dismiss them because they represent another opportunity for you to make a case for yourself.
12. Some schools are requiring that, in addition to a personal narrative, you submit a piece of graded analytical writing. Consider a paper you wrote junior year, but do not submit something as long as your research paper. Make certain your paper has plenty of teacher comments so the readers can appreciate the rigor of our writing expectations at HHS.
13. **Above all, proofread**; do not embarrass yourself by leaving glaring errors for your readers to find and chuckle over.