Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

First Typed Draft Due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Final Typed Essay Due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Senior College Essay Assignment**

Being able to write the perfect college entrance essay, or scholarship essay, might be the difference between admission or rejection, or the ability to leave college without debt, or the overwhelming pressure of loans waiting for you when you graduate.

While everyone might not go off to college next fall, and while not all colleges require a college essay, this skill, being able to concisely answer a question about oneself, or about their opinion, in 1-2 pages (double spaced and typed) is certainly an important skill to have when one leaves high school. It will also give me an idea of your current writing skill as your secondary education comes to an end.

**The parameters:**

* Choose from the topics provided from real school admissions packets or choose your own topic from college or scholarship applications.
* Write a 1-2 page typed essay answering the question.
* Be clever, but make sure you answer the question.
* Be brief, but make sure you say everything you need to.
* Since every word counts, each word you choose should be a worthy one.
* Break into your internal thesaurus and bust out brisk and bubbly verbs and adjectives.
* Stay active in your voice, and vary your sentence structure to keep the reader on his/her toes.
* Write short sentences. Write sentences of medium length. And sometimes, write long sentences that go on and on, but maintain the point of your essay and help to give the reader a sense, not only of what you think, but also of who you are.
* Organize the essay however you want, write short or long paragraphs, but whatever you do, don’t write a five paragraph essay.

**Writing hints:**

All of the questions, no matter how they are worded are asking you to tell the admissions committee about YOU.

That means YOU are the expert on that topic, and your task is simply to find a clear and interesting way to tell them what you already know.

The admissions/scholarship committee wants to see your writing style and ability and if you can write about yourself or some aspect that is not covered in your application information.

**Four Common Mistakes:**

Thinking that the admissions committee is a group of stuffy old professors that you need to impress.

Trying so hard to have your essay stand out that you come across as being odd or eccentric.

Writing a really predictable essay that is either boring (change the names and it could be anyone) or is so “canned” that it looks like one of those available online.

**Five Myths About The Application Essay:**

You have to write about something you’ve never written about before. Not only is this something not expected, but to do it is a real risk on your part.

There’s a right answer to the essay question.  No!  These are designed to get you to think, to approach ***yourself*** as a topic in a different way.

That you must be really funny or clever or downright wacky to get their attention.  Just be yourself!

You have to do this alone.  Do not try it.  Everyone who fancies themselves a writer, even the most talented novelist, asks someone trusted for feedback.  Follow their example.

12 Steps to writing a good essay

1. **Answer the Question.**
2. **Be Original.**
3. **Be Yourself.**
4. **Don't "Thesaurize" your composition, but use active verbs and colorful words**
5. **Use Imagery and Clear, Vivid Prose.**
6. **Spend the Most Time on your Introduction.**
	* **Don't Summarize in your Introduction.**
	* **Create Mystery or Intrigue in your Introduction.**
7. **Body Paragraphs Must Relate to Introduction.**
8. **Use Transitions Wisely.**
Applicants continue to ignore transition to their own detriment. You must use transition within paragraphs and especially between paragraphs to preserve the logical flow of your essay. Transition is not limited to phrases like *as a result, in addition, while ... , since ... , etc.* but includes repeating key words and progressing the idea. Transition provides the intellectual architecture to argument building.
9. **Conclusions are Crucial.**
The conclusion is your last chance to persuade the reader or impress upon them your qualifications. In the conclusion, avoid summary since the essay is rather short to begin with; the reader should not need to be reminded of what you wrote 300 words before. Also do not use stock phrases like *in conclusion, in summary, to conclude, etc.*
10. **Take a Break from Writing. Do Something Else.**
11. **Give your Draft to Others.**
12. **Revise, Revise, Revise -- and Keep Revising.**

Essay Topics

What have you undertaken or done on your own in the last year or two that has nothing to do with academic work? (Northwestern 2012)

What is the best advice you ever received? Why? And did you follow it? (University of Pennsylvania 2009)

If you were to look back on your high school years, what advice would you give to someone beginning their high school career? (Simmons 2011)

Tell us about the neighborhood that you grew up in and how it helped shape you into the kind of person you are today. (Yale and the University of Chicago 2005, 2011)

Tell us how a particular book, play, film, piece of music, dance performance, scientific theory or experiment or work of art has influenced you. If you choose a novel, film or play, assume we know the plot. (Notre Dame 2011)

Evaluate a significant experience or achievement that has special meaning to you. (Harvard 2004)

What are the responsibilities of an educated person? (University of Puget Sound 2003)

Describe your most important academic accomplishment or intellectual experience to date. We don’t want to know about test scores or course grades, rather we want to know about your creativity, your willingness to take intellectual risks or your affinity for scholarly endeavors. (MIT 2011)

Discuss how some negative experience (disability, illness, failure) has had a positive influence on your life. (Ohio State University 2012)

Discuss an important personal relationship you have had and explain how it has changed your life. (Davidson College 2000)

How has your family history, culture, or environment influenced who you are? (University of Florida 2008)

Write about a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence. (Hope College 2011)

If you could travel through time and interview any historical figure, whom would you choose, what would you ask, and why? (Hood 2012)

If you were to develop a Mt. Rushmore representing the 20th century, whose faces would you select and why? (William and Mary 2010)

**★**Community Scholarships essay topic 2014: On a separate document, explain why you think you’re the best candidate for this particular scholarship. Please attach your explanation to the application.