**YOUR GAME PLAN: Be Yourself & Be Honest**

***FIRST***, ensure you can successfully log into Naviance / Family Connection before leaving for the summer. Direct log in questions to Julie Bryant.

AHS Naviance/Family Connection site.
<https://connection.naviance.com/family-connection/auth/login>

The website is [connection.naviance.com/ames](http://connection.naviance.com/ames%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

***SECOND***, familiarize yourself with the school’s and nation’s college application systems—Naviance/Family Connection and the Common Application system. Sign up for accounts if needed. (Common App active links and step-by-step instructions can be found on your Family Connection “Home” page.) *See handout, Common App Counselor Guide to Application.*

***THIRD***, review information about college application essay writing. Suggested resources are below.

This **College Board** site offers a wealth of tips and guides.
[https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

This **New York Times blog**, The Choice, offers insights as well.  Of particular interest may be a series titled "The Envelop Please" that illustrates the college search process of eight high school seniors from around the world, and a June 23, 2009 entry titled "Tip Sheet: An Admission Dean Offers Advice on Writing a College Essay."
[http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/](http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)
<http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/23/tip-sheet-essay/>

# Quora site where peers answer the question “College and University Admissions: What did you write about for your college admissions essay?[http://www.quora.com/College-and-University-Admissions/What-did-you-write-about-for-your-college-admissions-essay?\_\_pmsg\_\_=+ZDRGc3V1Tzlrbzd2QmJnS3AxZjU6YS5hcHAudmlldy5wbXNnLmFsbC5Mb2dnZWRJbkZyb21MaW5rOltbMTEwODQzNTldLCB7fV0\*#ans2507021](http://www.quora.com/College-and-University-Admissions/What-did-you-write-about-for-your-college-admissions-essay?__pmsg__=+ZDRGc3V1Tzlrbzd2QmJnS3AxZjU6YS5hcHAudmlldy5wbXNnLmFsbC5Mb2dnZWRJbkZyb21MaW5rOltbMTEwODQzNTldLCB7fV0*#ans2507021)

# *FOURTH,* actively engage in summer writing by focusing on your Common App Essays.

Common App Instructions. The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores? Choose the option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. Use the full range if you need it, but don't feel obligated to do so. (The application won't accept a response shorter than 250 words.)

* Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
* Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
* Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
* Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
* Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

**Writing Your College Essay**

1. Brainstorm your personality traits and strengths. Think of three words that define you, but remember to be honest.
2. Figure out how the essay prompt fits these personal qualities. Take a position and create an outline with examples (evidence). Your focus should be narrow and personal, ensure that everything you write leads to this position / personal quality.

There are generally three essay prompt types—Describing Yourself, Why College Choice and Discuss an issue. (The College Board site offers great advice for tackling these prompts. Review it.)
3. First draft flow is akin to “hot pinning,” writing to get beyond sensors and limits to content that has depth. Begin to find your voice in this stage (your voice, not a parent’s). Your Tone is important and difficult to get right. (Don’t be surprised with the need to rewrite MANY times to narrow in on what is just-right.)
4. Further develop this first draft by firming up your essay’s three parts—intro, body and conclusion. (In my mind, college essays must merge narrative, descriptive, expository and persuasive components at times. Think about the purposes of these types and use appropriately.) During this stage, as you write and rewrite, consider these:
* Be Concise, don’t drain your reader’s patience. Also, when you attempt to cover too much material (avoid the list), you will tend to sound scattered and superficial.
* Be Coherent, write about one subject at a time with depth and clarity.
* Be Creative, finding a clever angle can also help you find your voice. While it is important to be thoughtful, get too heavy. Use a clever metaphor or well-placed witticism, or even self-deprecating humor. But use caution when attempting to use humor, your reviewer may not have the same sensibilities.
* Be Vivid, a good essay is like telling a story. Remember to show the reader not tell him/her. Suck the reader in by attending to setting and the descriptions of people and events.
* Be Controversial (if you can), take a stand but don’t pretend you already possess all the answers. Give reasons and argument for your views.
* Be Likable & Reveal Your Character, especially when living in close college communities (with greater diversity) getting along is valued. Know that many colleges rate your character and personality traits.
* Be Accurate, grammatical problems, punctuation errors, spelling mistakes can hurt. Proofread and get a proofreader. Seek feedback, but remember to maintain a personal voice.
* Be Smart, colleges are intellectual places where the learning process is as important and the subject. You can also convey your intellect through complex sentence structures and advanced vocabulary.
1. Visit with an ELP Teacher during the first quarter in the fall semester for help and advice.