20 Tips for Writing a Great College Essay

1. Start Early: Begin brainstorming and drafting during the summer before senior year to allow time for revisions and reduce stress.

2. Be Authentic: Admissions officers value your genuine voice. Write about experiences that truly matter to you.

3. Show, Don't Just Tell: Use specific anecdotes and vivid details to illustrate your story.

4. Reflect Deeply: Go beyond recounting events. Explain what you learned and how you grew.

5. Avoid Clichés: Don't shy away from popular topics, but bring a unique lens and fresh perspective.

6. Maintain Your Voice: Avoid overly formal or complex language. Be clear, natural, and confident.

7. Proofread Thoroughly: Small errors can distract from great content. Edit multiple times and get feedback.

8. Stick to the Prompt: Ensure your essay clearly answers the question being asked.

9. Highlight Growth: Show personal development, resilience, and learning from challenges.

10. Conclude with Impact: Finish strong with a message that ties back to your main idea and leaves a lasting impression.

11. Capture Ideas as They Come: Keep a notebook or app to jot down ideas and observations at any time.

12. Embrace Vulnerability: Sharing challenges or imperfections shows courage and builds connection.

13. Read Aloud for Clarity: This helps catch awkward phrasing and ensures a natural

flow.

14. Focus on Specific Moments: A detailed snapshot can be more powerful than a broad summary.

15. Avoid Clichés and Overused Themes: If tackling a common topic, approach it from a unique or personal angle.

16. Show, Don't Just Tell (Again!): Instead of claiming traits, demonstrate them through real experiences.

17. Seek Diverse Feedback: Ask for feedback from people with different backgrounds and perspectives.

18. Reflect on Personal Growth: Essays should show how you've evolved—emotionally, intellectually, or socially.

19. Maintain Your Authentic Voice: Let your true self shine through in tone, humor, and reflection.

20. Conclude with Purpose: Reiterate the core message or theme, and leave the reader with something to remember.