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## THE COLLEGE ESSAY



The college essay is one of the few variables you can control in the college selection process. In many cases it is entirely your decision on which topic to choose or how to answer their question. You have complete control of the end result. The essay is your opportunity to bring your application to life and to present the real you.

### DO

1. **Carefully choose your topic.** Be sure to choose something that is personal to you and that you will enjoy telling a story about. This is where you will find your voice. Write honestly and from your heart. Do not try to figure out what the admission officers want to read.
2. **Choose a moment in time rather than an "event."** Long diatribes about vacations, sporting championships, tragedies are very commonplace in essays and, therefore, are quite boring to admission readers. Select a moment in time — some time in your life when something you saw/did made you look differently at that person, place or thing.

3. **Show your personality.** The admission officer wants to know more about you through your essay. Avoid clichés. Don't be afraid to show your sense of humor, your passion for or against a controversial topic. Show the 'you' that is not apparent in the rest of your application.
4. **Be creative.** Step outside the box and do something different. Make your essay stand out! There are days when admission counselors read close to 100 essays (in addition to everything else in the application). The first paragraph tells the reader how creative you are and how eager he/she will be to read the rest of the essay.
5. **Use imagery, anecdotes, and stories.** Actual events make a story more believable. (Reread Number 2.) When you write from the heart, the story is much better told.
6. **Be brief.** Stick to the suggested length as stated in the application. If no length is stated, no more than two, double-spaced, typed pages will suffice. Even if you have a great essay, if it is several pages in length it may not get read thoroughly because of the volume admission people read in a tight time frame.
7. **Be Upbeat.** It is positive energy, not negative, that gets attention. Colleges want to know how you resolved difficulties, not how you are laboring under them. They want to know how you have what it takes to succeed. They don't want to hear a long, whining story about how unfair life is. If some aspect of your high school record needs explaining (illness, leave of absence, a disastrous semester), **explain**. Don't provide a ton of excuses, avoid the sob story, and don't ramble.

(Continued on next page)



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## The College Essay (continued from page 1)

8. **Write your essay in advance.** Prepare a rough draft at the end of junior year or during the summer. After you write your first draft, let it sit for a day or two. Then, go back and look at it with a fresh perspective and keep improving it.
9. **Get it proofread.** Choose someone who can be objective with your writing and is a strong writer. Absolutely no cross-outs are acceptable, nor are spelling and grammatical errors. "Spell check" on the computer will not suffice for checking your work.
10. **Answer the question.** You'd be surprised at how many students just submit one essay to all colleges to which they apply. This shows lack of interest and laziness on their part and will certainly reflect **negatively** in the admission process.

### DON'T

1. Use words that are not in your everyday vocabulary.
2. Repeat the information contained elsewhere in the application. Talking about your soccer career will be a snoozer to the admission officer.
3. Exceed the recommended length.

## University of California Personal Statement

The purpose of the personal statement is to provide information that supports and enables the applicant to make the best case possible for admissions. However, an admissions decision will never be based on the content of a personal statement alone.

### Prompts:

- Academic achievement
- Potential to contribute
- Open-ended

### Word Limits:

- Two 200-word responses
- One 600-word extended response

Choice of which prompt to use for the extended response.

### The Prompts

#### Focus on Academic Achievement (#1)

**Question:** How have you taken advantage of the educational opportunities you have had to prepare for college?

**Rationale:** The university seeks to enroll students who take initiative in pursuing their education. This question seeks to understand a student's motivation and dedication to learning.

#### Potential to Contribute (#2)

**Question:** Tell us about a talent, experience, contribution or personal quality you will bring to the University of California.

**Rationale:** The University welcomes contributions each student brings to the campus learning community. This question seeks to determine an applicant's academic or creative interests and potential to contribute to the vitality of the University.

#### Open-Ended (#3)

**Question:** Is there anything you would like us to know about you or your academic record that you have not had the opportunity to describe elsewhere in the application?

**Rationale:** This question seeks to give students the opportunity to share important aspects of their schooling or their lives, such as personal circumstances, family experiences and opportunities that were or were not available at their school — which may not have been sufficiently addressed elsewhere in the application.

**Online tutorial:**

<http://www.ucgateways.org>

## TOPICS TO AVOID

In general, the following topics are not well-received by admission staff mainly because they are so common in the essay, and admission officers get tired of reading about them:

- Family vacation
- The athletic event (championship game, etc.)
- Parent as most admired person
- The autobiography (recounting your accomplishments)

If you feel you must use one of these topics, then your story-telling ability should be of such unique quality that the reader forgets that this is a common topic.

\*\*\*A note about writing about a tragedy (death, divorce, etc.). In recent years, many students have felt that they must have endured a "tragic moment" in their lives to make themselves stand out. Not true! No one is discounting the impact of a tragedy on you as an individual. However, when thousands upon thousands of students write about the same topic, admission readers become bored and not too sympathetic. If you must write about a tragedy, write not so much about the event, but more about how that event impacted your life or someone else's.





# College Admission Game Plan

## Freshman

Keep working hard!!

- ▶ Get to know your counselor TODAY
- ▶ Check out the college and career center



## Sophomore

- Make sure you are “on top” of your academic work. If necessary, meet with your teacher for additional help.
- Save your best work in academic courses and the arts for your academic portfolio (all year).
- *Think quality, not quantity, when it comes to your extra-curricular activities.* Seek out leadership positions in a few activities that truly interest you. Colleges are more interested that you dedicated yourself to a few select activities than boast a long list of clubs, sports, groups, and interests.
- Private schools like to see a commitment to *community service*.
- *Seek out college or university information.* Attend College Night in your district (Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2005) at University High School.

## Junior

- ◆ Talk with your parents about how you will finance your college costs and how much they expect you to pay. Remember, sometimes private schools that look expensive on paper may actually be more affordable than a public school once you figure in aid.
- ◆ Put together a list of 10 colleges that you would like to attend. Plan to apply to at least 3 of those schools, if not all. Research their requirements necessary for admission.
- ◆ Check dates for SAT, SAT II and ACT test registration deadlines (in this issue). You’ll want to take at least one or two SAT tests before the end of your junior year.
- ◆ Junior year grades are extremely important in the college admission process because they are a measure of how well you do in advanced, upper-level courses. Grades also are used to determine scholarships and grants for which you may be eligible. So put in the extra effort and keep those grades up!



UC Irvine is conducting its 16th annual Academic Talent Search (ATS) for academically talented youth in grades 6 and above.

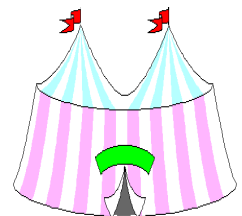
ATS is a two-fold testing program that identifies students with extraordinary mathematical and/or verbal reasoning skills; assists participants in their placement in pre-college programs; and offers useful information and materials for parents and educators of high-ability students. The ATS offers these students an opportunity to sharpen their test-taking skills in preparation for the PSAT and the SAT I.

Eligible students are those in grade 6-10 who either have been identified as gifted through a school or district GATE program, or who have scored at least at the 90th percentile on a standardized grade level achievement test (i.e. CAT, CTBS, Stanford 9). More information about the program and applications may be found at the ATS office at (949) 824-5822.

## SAVE THE DATE

### OC National College Fair

Anaheim Convention Center  
Saturday, April 22, 2006  
1:30pm - 4:30pm





# SCHOLARSHIPS

## ☐ Sun Trust Off to College Scholarship

Award: \$1,000

Eligibility: Seniors. *Not* based on GPA or financial need.  
15 chances to win – one winner every two weeks from Oct.-May  
Website: <http://www.suntrusteducation.com/sweeps/default.asp>

## ☐ Disneyland Scholarship Program

Award: Starting at \$5,000

Eligibility: High School Senior planning on attending college.

This scholarship is based on community service hours.  
Student must have a 3.0 GPA, 50 hours of community service within the past 12 months and 100 hours of community service over their high school career.

Applications are available in the counseling office.

Deadline: January 31, 2006

## ☐ Order Sons of Italy in America – Grand Lodge of Calif.

Award: \$500 - \$5,000

Eligibility: Applicants must be wholly or partly of Italian ancestry and completed a foreign language course in high school. Selection based on scholastics, activities, leadership and financial need.

Website: [www.sonsofitalyca.org](http://www.sonsofitalyca.org)

Deadline March 1, 2006

## ☐ Hispanic Scholarship Fund

Award: \$1,000-\$2,500

Eligibility: Graduating high school senior of Hispanic origin.  
Must be a citizen or permanent legal resident, have 3.0 GPA, and complete the FAFSA in January.

Website: [www.hsf.net](http://www.hsf.net)

Deadline: December 15, 2005

## ☐ Southern California Mothers of Twins Club, Inc

Award: \$250-\$1,200.

Eligibility: Seniors who are planning on attending college and are of multiple birth.

Website: [www.scmotc.org](http://www.scmotc.org)

Deadline: February 1, 2006

## ☐ AXA Achievement Scholarship

Award: \$10,000-\$25,000

Eligibility: Seniors who are planning on attending college.  
Letter of recommendation from unrelated adult.

Website: [www.axa-achievement.com](http://www.axa-achievement.com)

Deadline: December 15, 2005

## ☐ Gates Millennium Scholars

Award: varies

Eligibility: Seniors who show financial need and are of African American, American Indian, Asian Pacific Islander American, or Hispanic American origin. Fill out FAFSA and Pell Grant Applications.

Website: [www.gmsp.org](http://www.gmsp.org)

Deadline: January 13, 2006

## ☐ Discover Card Tribute Award

Award: \$2,500 (9 state scholarships) \$25,000 (9 national scholarships)

Eligibility: Juniors with a minimum cumulative (9th & 10th grade) 2.75 GPA who have special talents, obstacles overcome, or excel in leadership or community service.

Website: [www.aasa.org/discover](http://www.aasa.org/discover)

Deadline: check website in November

## ☐ Ron Brown Scholar Program

Award: \$10,000. per year for four years.

Eligibility: African-American seniors who plan on attending college and demonstrate excellence, leadership potential, community service and financial need.

Website: [www.ronbrown.org](http://www.ronbrown.org)

Deadline: January 9, 2006

## ☐ Mensa Education and Research Foundation Scholarship Essay Contest

Award: \$300 - \$1000

Eligibility: Seniors who are planning on enrolling in a 4-year accredited institution. Must submit an essay and application, be a U.S. Citizen or permanent resident.

Website: [www.ocmensa.org](http://www.ocmensa.org)

Deadline: January 15, 2006

## ☐ National Association of Hispanic Journalists

Award: varies

Eligibility: Hispanic seniors interested in pursuing careers in broadcast, print or photo journalism.

Website: [www.nahj.org/educationalprograms/currents-scholarships.shtml](http://www.nahj.org/educationalprograms/currents-scholarships.shtml)

Deadline: check website mid November

## ☐ DuPont Challenge Science Essay

Award: varies to \$1,500

Eligibility: Sophomore, juniors and seniors. Essay discussing a scientific or technological development, event or theory.

Website: [www.glcomm.com/dupont/competition.html](http://www.glcomm.com/dupont/competition.html)

Deadline: January 20, 2006

## ☐ 1st Freedom Student Competition

Award: \$750 - \$3,000.

Eligibility: grades 9-12. Essay about religious freedom, its history, current importance and relevance in your life.

Website: [www.firstfreedom.org/programs/studentcomp.html](http://www.firstfreedom.org/programs/studentcomp.html)

Deadline: December 1, 2005

## ☐ AAA Travel High School Challenge

Award: \$10,000 - \$25,000

Eligibility: grades 9-12 Online test in January followed by State and National Competition. Most questions are travel related.

Website:

<http://www.aaa.com/travelchallenge/home2005.html>

Deadline: check website in November for more info



### Patrick Kerr Skateboard Scholarship

Award: \$1000 - \$5000

Eligibility: high school senior with a 2.5 or higher GPA planning on attending a 2 or 4 year college. Must be a skateboarder.

Website: [www.skateboardscholarship.com](http://www.skateboardscholarship.com)

Deadline: April 20, 2006

### **ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION AWARDS**

#### Most Valuable Student Competition

Award: \$1,000 - \$15,000 per year for 4 years

Eligibility: seniors – selection based on academics and leadership.

Website: [www.elks.org/enf/scholars/mvs.cfm](http://www.elks.org/enf/scholars/mvs.cfm)

Deadline: January 13, 2006

#### Legacy Award

Award: \$ 1,000

Eligibility: Child or grandchild of an Elk member.

Website: [www.elks.org/enf/scholars/legacy.cfm](http://www.elks.org/enf/scholars/legacy.cfm)

Deadline: January 13, 2006

#### Eagle Scout Award

Award: \$1,000 - \$2,000

Eligibility: A student that is a registered Eagle Scout who is a senior in high school.

Website: [www.elks.org/enf/scholars/eaglescouts.cfm](http://www.elks.org/enf/scholars/eaglescouts.cfm)

Deadline: January 13, 2006

#### Girl Scout Gold Award

Award: \$1,500 per year for 4 years

Eligibility: Girl Scout Gold Award winner who is a high school senior.

Website: [www.elks.org/enf/scholars/goldawards.cfm](http://www.elks.org/enf/scholars/goldawards.cfm)

Deadline: January 13, 2006

#### Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities

Award: \$1,000 - \$2,000

Eligibility: students who have a physical, neurological, visual, hearing impairment, or speech or language disorder.

Website: [www.chea-elks.org/uspsd.html](http://www.chea-elks.org/uspsd.html)

Deadline: January 13, 2006

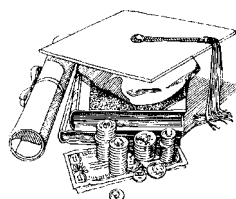
#### Vocational Grant

Award: \$1,000

Eligibility: Any U.S. citizen planning to pursue a vocational program after high school

Website: [www.chea-elks.org/vocationalgrant.html](http://www.chea-elks.org/vocationalgrant.html)

Deadline: January 13, 2006



## CHECK OUT THESE WEBSITES

for more scholarship info. . .

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)  
[www.scholarships4Students.com](http://www.scholarships4Students.com)  
[www.gocollege.com](http://www.gocollege.com)  
[www.scholarships101.com](http://www.scholarships101.com)  
[www.srnexpress.com](http://www.srnexpress.com)  
[www.embarck.com](http://www.embarck.com)  
[www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)  
[www.wiredscholar.com](http://www.wiredscholar.com)  
[www.brokescholar.com](http://www.brokescholar.com)  
[www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com)  
[www.lunch-money.com](http://www.lunch-money.com)



### SAT & Subject Test Dates 2005/2006

Test Date	Due	Late
December 3	Oct. 28	Nov. 9
January 28	Dec. 22	Jan. 4
April 1 <b>**SAT ONLY</b>	Feb. 24	Mar. 8
May 6	Apr. 3	Apr. 12
June 3	Apr. 28	May 10

### ACT Test Dates 2005-2006

Test Date	Due	Late
December 10	Nov. 4	Nov. 5-17
February 11	Jan. 6	Jan. 7-20
April 8	Mar. 3	Mar. 4-17
June 10	May 5	May 6-19



### College Guidance Book

Now accessible on-line, the College Guidance Book is written specifically with Irvine students and families in mind. From annual checklists, to creating your Admission folder, the College Guidance Book will help you proceed with confidence.

**SENIOR SPOTLIGHT:**

# College Application Requirements...

## *There's More Than Just a Form*

Applications vary from college to college, but most require some or all of the following parts:

### ■ Application Form

In the old days (well, a few years ago), you had one application option - a hand-written or typed form. Today you can apply online, entering your information just once.

### ■ Application Fee

The average college application fee is around \$25. (Some colleges charge up to \$60, while others don't have an application fee at all.) The fee is usually non-refundable, even if you're not offered admission. Many colleges offer fee waivers for applicants from low-income families. If you need a fee waiver, call the college's admission office for more information.

### ■ High School Transcript

This form is filled out by an official of your high school. If it comes with your admission materials, you should give it to the guidance office to complete as early as possible. Some colleges send this form directly to your school after receiving your application.

### ■ Admission Test Scores

At many colleges, you have to submit SAT®, SAT Subject Test™, or ACT test scores. Test scores are a standard way of measuring a student's ability to do college-level work.

### ■ Letters of Recommendation

Your entire application should create a consistent portrait of who you are. Many private colleges ask you to submit one or more letters of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or other adult who knows you well. When asking someone to write such a letter, be sure to do so well before the college's deadline.

### ■ Essay

If you're applying to private colleges, your essay often plays a very important role. Whether you're writing an autobiographical statement or an essay on a specific theme, take the opportunity to express your individuality in a way that sets you apart from other applicants.

### ■ Interview

This is required or recommended by some colleges. Even if it's not required, it's a good idea to set up an interview because it gives you a chance to make a personal connection with someone who will have a voice in deciding whether or not you'll be offered admission. If you're too far away for an on-campus interview, try to arrange to meet with an alumnus in your community.

### ■ Audition/Portfolio

If you're applying for a program such as music, art, or design, you may have to document prior work by auditioning on campus or submitting an audiotape, slides, or some other sample of your work to demonstrate your ability.

### ■ The Sum of the Parts

Your entire application should create a consistent portrait of who you are and what you'll bring to the college. The more the pieces of the puzzle support one impression, the more confident the admission committee will be in admitting you. If the essay or interview contradicts information you gave on other forms, you may cause them to have doubts about accepting you.

If all the parts of your application are filled out honestly and carefully, with an attention to your conviction that each school is a good match for you, you will come across in the best possible light.

