

How to Kick-Start Your College Essay

Essay Workshop: _____. **Please bring your draft essay.**

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Sometimes the hardest part of writing a college admissions essay is just getting started. Here's a quick exercise to get pen to paper (or keyboard to computer).

Step 1: Think about yourself

What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your best qualities? Are you a plugger? An intellectual? A creative type? Curious? Passionate? Determined?

Step 2: Choose a positive quality you would like to convey to the admissions committee

Don't pick an event or something you've done. President of the Nuclear Awareness Club is not a personal quality. Focus on a quality of your mind or of your character. Complete this sentence: "I am a very _____ person."

Step 3: Tell a story

Set a timer for 20 minutes. Pretend you're taking an exam at high school and responding to, "Tell a story about an experience or time when you showed you were a very _____ person." Use the characteristic you identified in Step 2. Write or type non-stop for 20 minutes; force yourself to keep telling the story and what it reveals until the timer goes off.

You're Done

Okay. That's it. You've got a rough draft for your college application essay. Look at the college application forms and see what questions they ask. No matter what the questions are, you've already identified the important characteristic you want to convey to each college.