

# Writing a Personal Essay

This lesson is designed to help students gather information and construct a personal essay that is organized in a professional way.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn the main components necessary for creating a strong college admissions personal essay.
2. Students will compose a personal essay for college admissions.

## ACTIVITIES

### PART 1

### Content Knowledge

Explain to students the college application process and the importance of the personal essay. When applying for college, most schools will require the submission of a personal essay. This essay is used by colleges and universities to get to know potential students. The main goal of a personal essay is to give colleges information about the student in an interesting and engaging way.

Review college admissions and personal essay requirements. Most colleges use one of three topics:

- Who are you?
- Why do you wish to attend our college?
- Tell us about a life-changing experience

### Essay Review

Before students start their essay, share with them examples of successful sample essays from the provided link [here](#). Divide students into groups to read and discuss a sample essay. Have students answer the following questions:

- What did they like and dislike about the essay?
- How was the essay organized?
- What can they take from this essay and apply to their own essay?

### PART 2

### Critical Thinking/Creative Application

Students should use the Get To Know Yourself assessment on the MEFA Pathway website to help identify their interests, values, and skills.

When they are finished with the assessment, have students complete the Personal Essay Organizer worksheet.

Grade Level: 11 - 12

### MEFA PATHWAY LINKS FOR LESSON:

- [Get to Know Yourself](#)

### SUBJECT AREAS:

- College Applications

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Internet connection to work with the MEFA Pathway website
- Personal Essay Grading Rubric (attached)
- Personal Essay Organizer (attached)
- Common App Essay Prompts
- [Sample Essay](#)

Email any questions to:  
[info@mefapathway.org](mailto:info@mefapathway.org)

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**Applying Information**

After students have seen examples of a personal essay, gathered information on what to include in their personal essay, and taken the Get to Know Yourself assessment to identify their interests, values, and skills, ask students to write a reflective response to one of the following prompts:

- Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution, or life experience that has significantly impacted your life
- Tell us why you wish to attend a certain college and why you would be a good fit as a student at that school
- Write about yourself and help us get to know the real you

Ask volunteers to share and discuss what they wrote about in their essay. Have students answer the following questions:

- Which question/topic was easiest to write about and which was the most difficult? Why?
- Do you think these are good topics for schools to get to know you? Why?

**Personal Essay Grading Rubric**

CATEGORY	EXCELLENT 4	GOOD 3	SATISFACTORY 2	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT 1
Format & Content	The format of the essay is clear. Each section has the required content	The format of the essay is mostly clear. Each section has most of the required content	The format of the essay is somewhat confusing. Each section is missing some of the content.	The format of the essay is unclear. Each section is missing required information or is missing altogether.
Effectiveness	Essay appears professional in appearance and style.	Essay is appropriately professional in appearance and style; however, there are some inconsistencies.	Essay is less than professional in appearance and style. Many inconsistencies.	Essay is unprofessional in appearance and style. It needs a lot of revision.
Font Choice & Formatting	Font formats (size, bold, italic) have been carefully planned to enhance readability and content.	Font formats have been carefully planned to enhance readability.	Font formatting has been carefully planned to complement the content. It may be a little hard to read.	Font formatting makes it very difficult to read the material.
Conventions	Presentation has no errors in conventions (punctuation, grammar, or spelling).	Presentation has 1-2 errors in conventions (punctuation, grammar, or spelling).	Presentation has 3-4 errors in conventions (punctuation, grammar, or spelling).	Presentation has more than 5 errors in conventions (punctuation, grammar, or spelling).

## Personal Essay Organizer

### Interests, Values, & Skills

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### Strengths & Weaknesses

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### Academic Success

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### Life-Changing Experiences

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### Extracurricular Activities

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