

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

Students will...

1. Review the Common App essay prompts
2. Review and reflect on sample essays
3. Compose a draft 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.

Many colleges use the Common App as their application for admission, and the Common App has seven essay prompts. Have students review the prompts on the [Common App website](#).

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 review their *Digital Portfolio* to remind themselves of their interests, skills, activities, and accomplishments.

When they are finished reviewing their *Digital Portfolio*, have students complete the Personal Essay Organizer worksheet.

Grade Level: 11

MEFA PATHWAY SECTIONS WITHIN THIS LESSON:

- Get to Know Yourself

DOMAIN:

- College & Career Exploration

TIME:

- 30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

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

FUTURE READY SKILLS:

- Creativity
- Evaluating
- Persuasion

VOCABULARY:

- Prompt
- Personal essay

Email any questions to:
info@mefapathway.org



LESSON PLAN

Applying Information

After students have seen examples of a personal essay and gathered information on what to include in their personal essay, 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?

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Personal Essay Organizer

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Interests, Values, & Skills

Strengths & Weaknesses

Academic Success

Life-Changing Experiences

Extracurricular Activities

Writing a Personal Essay Grading Rubric

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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	Essay has no errors in conventions (punctuation, grammar, or spelling).	Essay has 1-2 errors in conventions (punctuation, grammar, or spelling).	Essay has 3-4 errors in conventions (punctuation, grammar, or spelling).	Essay has more than 5 errors in conventions (punctuation, grammar, or spelling).