

**Tips for Writing College Essays/Personal Statements**

**College Essay:** A college provides you a prompt or question to answer and a word limit (e.g. CU Boulder)

**Personal Statement:** You choose the topic, but it should be about you! (e.g. CSU)

* Get started early!
* **How long should my personal statement be**? Typically ONE page, no more than two (~ 500 words, double-spaced and typed)
* Before you write, pre-write….
* **What are some topics I can write about?**
* What has been your greatest accomplishment and/or failure?
* If your grades aren’t the best, it’s good to explain what was going on during that part of your life. Then, you need to discuss what you’re doing to improve your grades.
* How would your friends and family describe you? Ask them!
* Who do you know personally that you admire or who inspires you?
* Have you overcome any adversity or hardship in your life?
* What is the greatest risk you’ve ever taken?
* Have you ever made a difference in someone else’s life?
* If applying to several colleges, compare the essay requirements. You may be able to write a general essay that you can adapt to use for several different college or scholarship applications.
* Use graphic organizers or concept maps to organize ideas, outline, write a rough draft
* Do’s and don’ts of writing
* Do organize your essay with an introduction, body, and conclusion.
* Do use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
* Do be original. Don’t be cliché.
* Do be specific. Avoid being too general by using examples and giving details.
* Do be clear and concise.
* Don’t use your thesaurus. Use your own words and write in a conversational tone that is not too formal or too informal. It’s a personal statement. Don’t write something that you wouldn’t actually say.
* Don’t repeat information from your application or resume.
* Do answer the question being asked on the application (*if applicable)*.
* Do adhere to word limits.
* Do proofread. Do proofread again.
* Do get someone else to read your essay like a teacher or counselor.