

# AK Amba College Info + Q&A Day 3 (Essay Advice)



**Welcome!!**



# Overview

- Thank you for joining us!
  - First 20-25 min: Presentations (4 Speakers)
  - Last 20-25 min: Q+A (I have questions written from the Sign-Up Genius, but drop any you think of in the chat!)

**\*\*An optional feedback form will be at the end! Everyone can respond, but especially if you are an Amba Club member please fill this out!\*\***

# College Essay Topic Selection

Ava Tennis

UNC School of the Arts

# Choosing a Prompt

- There are seven essay prompts (for the Common App)
- Some offer more helpful questions to help with brainstorming and topic creation.
- Prompt #7 allows for practically any topic or essay design.

Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

## Prompt #7

- Ambiguity allows for full creative and narrative control.
- Can be difficult to find a topic without clear direction.
- Ultimately is the best choice if you don't connect with/ aren't inspired by any other prompt.

# Choosing a Topic

## Values Exercise:

- 10 personal values
  - Choose the most significant 5.
- Write an anecdote about each of the 5
  - Highlight parts of the anecdotes that are interesting or expansive
- Choose your top 3 personal values
  - Now, you can write about one, or all three if they connect well.

**\*\*You don't have to actually write about a value, but can instead use this exercise to form deeper personal meaning about a more physical topic or anecdote.\*\***

# Choosing a Topic

## Objects Exercise:

- 10 objects with significance
  - Write an anecdote about each
  - Highlight parts of the anecdotes that are interesting or expansive
  - Choose the one with the most significance to other aspects of your life and that exhibits your values the most accurately
- Examples:
  - Sakira's Rosin
  - Ritz Crackers
  - Paper Laptop
  - *The Old Man and The Sea*
  - Ms. O'hagan's Umbrella

Simple objects fascinate me. In fifth grade, my fascination came from a lavender canopy that was partially disconnected from its stem, like a sad flower. My teacher at the time, Ms. O'Hagan, owned a broken umbrella that mimicked a secret agent's gadget and mocked the magical qualities of Hagrid's flowery pink umbrella. It was fully functioning if the canopy was held onto dearly while opening, but if not, the top would shoot off in whichever direction the umbrella was pointing. I asked question after question, trying to comprehend the mechanical fault that had occurred, and wrap my mind around why someone would keep using such an object besides mere sentiment.

## Introduction

- Introduce object
  - Hold out on mentioning the object title for as long as possible.
- Introduce significance
  - This is a topic you can expand upon in the body paragraphs.

Ms. O'Hagan would have continued using it until the top flew away in the wind, but I knew she deserved an umbrella that would loyally protect her from the rain. I purchased a brand new, beautiful, functioning umbrella and gifted it to her on the last day of school. Understanding the fascination I had with her umbrella, Ms. O'Hagan accepted the gift and handed me the broken one, which I accepted with paradoxical excitement and pride.

## Transition

- Finish the object anecdote
  - Tie the story/ introduction up in a positive way that is interesting and gives a “why” to your choice to write about it.
- Integrate your personal values into the finality of the story
  - This object is significant because it shows *what* about you?



By fifth grade, my brain had reached a more inquisitive point than all the curious years before. I would test the limits and see just how many questions I could ask a teacher before she started questioning my intentions. Many teachers grew tired of my lack of immediate acceptance towards what they considered fact, and would put limits on the questions I could ask in one class. Ms. O'Hagan, on the other hand, couldn't have been further from that. She would listen to my questions and stories and respond appropriately to each. Like a maternal figure, she frequently told me how appreciative she was of my exploratory view of the world, and how the other teachers just did not understand me.

This curiosity has followed me into every aspect of my life. In school, I pose questions that require teachers to do additional research on the topic they are explaining. In church, I ask enough questions that I eventually start getting responses like, "Ava, just accept it!" At home, I ask questions that have no answers, and play devil's advocate during family discussions.

In tenth grade, I realized that foreign languages were taught from a multi-dimensional perspective (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), but English was not. It suddenly made sense to me why so many scholars and intellectuals get by with obvious grammatical mistakes in speech, yet are ridiculed for making similar mistakes in writing. I promptly questioned my previous English teacher as to why such a crucial subject as English is taught from such a linear perspective. I assumed this question would be blown off as rude, or that I just "didn't know what I was talking about." Fortunately, I was wrong. My question was taken very seriously and discussed in meetings and teacher discussions. This year, the English 1 curriculum at my high school is being changed to include a non-fiction speaking portion because of the question I prompted in tenth grade.

## Body Paragraphs

- Diverge from object discussion, but use callback references to keep the context relevant.
- Continue discussing your personal values and positive attributes.

Now, a foot away from me sits the broken lavender umbrella that opened the door to my constant curiosity. Like the canopy derailing from the stem, my thoughts often deviate from the status quo, but when held onto dearly, they flourish.

## Conclusion

- Tie it back to the object
- Connect the object to the values.
- Finish it with a thematic statement.

# Overall Essay Advice

Olivia Walsh  
NC State University

The image is a screenshot of a Zoom meeting. At the top, the Zoom title bar reads "College essay advice - Olivia Walsh" and includes standard window controls. Below the title bar is the Zoom toolbar with icons for mute, video, chat, and other functions. In the top right corner, there is a small video feed of a woman with glasses and a red hoodie. The main area of the screen displays a presentation slide. The slide has a white background with black text. The title is "How to make it unique". Below the title is a list of prompts, each preceded by a hyphen. The prompts are: "-What makes you, you?", "-If you are applying into a specific college at that university, why?", "-How do you feel different from your peers?", "-Something that seriously affected your life and changed you as a person or your views.", and "- DO NOT WRITE ABOUT COVID". On the left side of the slide, there is a vertical navigation pane with several slide thumbnails. The current slide is highlighted in yellow. At the bottom of the slide, there is a small text prompt: "Click to add speaker notes".

College essay advice - Olivia Walsh

File Edit View Insert Format Slide Arrange Tools Add-ons Help

How to make it unique

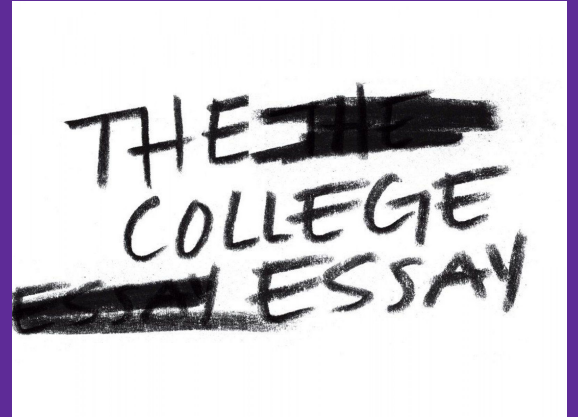
- What makes you, you?
- If you are applying into a specific college at that university, why?
- How do you feel different from your peers?
- Something that seriously affected your life and changed you as a person or your views.
- DO NOT WRITE ABOUT COVID

Click to add speaker notes

\*\*Mentioned in video: Email ([omwalsh@ncsu.edu](mailto:omwalsh@ncsu.edu))\*\*

# College Essay Advice

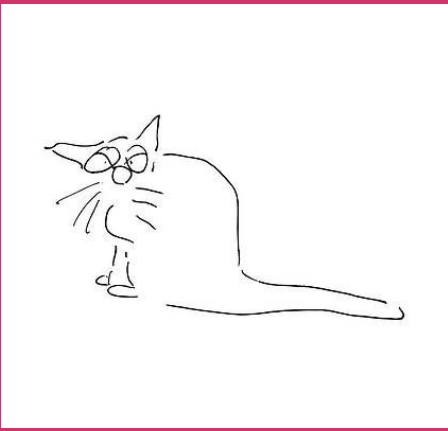
Elise Zhang  
Duke University





# Goals of a College Essay





vs.



# Showing vs. Telling

"I cried." vs.

"My vision blurred, the light of the room reflected into my eyes, the patterns mixed into a flurry of blindingly bright colors and the subject became indiscernible."



# Reusing Essays





## Extra Tips

- You aren't obligated to take other people's advice. Follow your voice.
- Ask friends to read it.
- Don't be afraid to start over.





Good luck! Happy essay writing!!!



# What a “Good College Essay” Entails

Anisha Reddy  
Duke University

# What makes a good college essay?

- Personality, not accomplishments
  - Don't include things that you can better highlight in other parts of your application
- Take time to reflect
  - Before writing, brainstorm events, people, or ideas that have shaped you as a person
  - In your essay, don't just summarize or describe (so what?)
- Avoid cliches!
  - Mission trips, sports injuries, etc. have been written about a million times
- Be descriptive
  - Show, don't tell

# Cont.

- Keep the essay focused and specific
  - Keeps the reader's attention better and is more memorable
  - Gives you more room to make a point instead of just describing events
- Review your word choice after writing
  - Especially verbs

# Q+A Portion

# Thanks for Joining Us!!

- Optional Feedback Form (we'd love to hear from you!):

[www.bit.ly/ambafeedback](http://www.bit.ly/ambafeedback)

- We will be linking the recordings on our website:

[www.akambassadors.weebly.com](http://www.akambassadors.weebly.com)