

## What's a college ("academic") essay?

The traditional form for writing in college is the **college** or **academic essay**. Students who went to high school recently have probably practiced this form. But in college, the expectations can be higher: a college essay is more complicated and formal than most high school writing.

A college essay

- is usually not personal (but it depends on the assignment!)
- often requires support from source material (usually scholarly sources)
- is written to an **academic audience**
- uses **academic style**: "formal, but not too formal"

### What about structure?

A college essay is made up of an introduction, body, and conclusion.

- The **introduction** raises the topic and presents a focused **thesis**: the main idea, claim or assertion that the entire essay develops.
- Each **body paragraph** is guided by a **topic sentence**, which presents the paragraph's main idea.
- The **conclusion** brings the discussion to a close

### What are college essays about?

Essay assignments usually ask you to respond to a specific question OR ask you to choose a topic from course material and "narrow" it to a meaningful focus.

### What's the best way to write a college essay?

Writers use lots of different strategies, but the most important thing is to use a thoughtful **writing process**. Divide your writing task into steps, like these:

selecting a topic → study/research → note-taking → idea-mapping → drafting →  
→ revision, revision, revision! → editing → proofreading

### Want some more good advice?

- Create a **schedule** before you get started, to help you stay on track.
- Get **feedback** from peers and your instructor.
- Remember to **edit!** But save editing until the end of your process, and plan plenty of time!
- **Visit the Writing Center!**