Jumpstart Your College Essays

🎯 7 Steps for Identifying Personal Strengths and Addressing Weaknesses for Your College Essays

1. **Start with the Evidence: Review Your Report Cards and Best Work**
   Gather past report cards, teacher comments, and standout assignments to spot consistent strengths—whether academic excellence, creative thinking, or persistence—and build your application narrative around them.

2. **Build a Visual Inventory of Your Strengths and Weaknesses**
   Make a simple 2-column table with the headers **"Experience"** and **"Outcome."** In each row, list a class, project, job, or activity in the first column, and describe what it revealed about your abilities in the second. Patterns will emerge—highlighting strengths to feature and weaknesses to improve or explain elsewhere in your application.

3. **Turn Your Inventory Into Personal Stories**
   Choose 2–3 moments from your inventory that illustrate your most important qualities. Draft short stories about these experiences that demonstrate how you think, grow, lead, or respond to challenges—these will become the foundation for your essays, interviews, and supplemental materials.

4. **Demonstrate Growth by Addressing Weaknesses Constructively**
   When discussing areas of improvement, focus on the steps you've taken to overcome challenges. This approach shows self-awareness and a commitment to personal development.

5. **Highlight Specific Skills Relevant to College Success**
   Emphasize skills such as critical thinking, time management, and collaboration. Providing concrete examples of how you've applied these skills can strengthen your application.

6. **Craft a Cohesive Narrative Across Application Components**
   Ensure consistency in your personal statement, resume, and recommendation letters to present a unified and compelling story about your strengths and growth areas.

7. **Seek Feedback to Gain Insight into Your Strengths and Weaknesses**
   Consult with teachers, mentors, or peers to gain different perspectives on your abilities and areas for improvement. Their insights can help you better understand and articulate your profile.

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📚**Free Resource List**

Resource Summary	Link
Comprehensive guide to writing effective college essays, including brainstorming and editing tips.	[BigFuture College Essay Guide](#)
Blog offering advice on various aspects of the college admissions process.	[College Essay Guy Blog](#)
Harvard's resource hub for college application prep, including writing and interview tips.	[Harvard College Application Resources](#)
UC Berkeley's comprehensive directory of college application tools and timelines across different systems.	[UC Berkeley CEP Resource Directory](#)
Johns Hopkins University's guide to navigating the college planning and decision-making process.	[JHU College Planning Guide](#)
UPenn's downloadable "Applying to College 101" workbook for students and families.	[UPenn Applying to College 101](#)
Harvard College's guide to selecting high school courses and preparing academically for college.	[Harvard Guide to Preparing for College](#)
Central Michigan University's detailed college application timeline by school year.	[CMU College Application Timeline](#)
Georgia Tech's perspective-based guide for rising seniors navigating the application process.	[Georgia Tech Admissions Blog](#)
Berry College's student-focused survival guide to the admissions process.	[Berry College Admissions Guide](#)