Writing has always been an area in which I haven't felt the strongest. For as long as I can remember my strong points have consisted of math or science but never writing. I was a phenomenal reader but when it came to structuring my words in a way that correctly expressed my ideas without sounding repetitive. I struggled with these issues throughout the majority of my middle and high school careers, and I wasn't confronted with the reality of my issue till sophomore year. Ms. Cromwell was my sophomore-year Pre-AP English teacher. Walking into her class I wasn't aware that I would be in for the rudest awakening when it came to my writing. She critiqued everything from my use of punctuation to my grammar, to my abundance of run-on sentences. I was aware my writing wasn't perfect, but I did not realize how far from perfect it truly was. Throughout the course of the year, she kept assigning essays and I kept falling short. Every time I aimed to fix one issue, another issue miraculously appeared from the horizon, making writing a very frustrating experience. I felt as though no matter what I did I would never be the writer I aspired to be: the writer that always got the A.

After a whole semester of underperforming on every writing assignment and struggling to stay ahead in the class, I finally scheduled a meeting with Ms. Cromwell. I asked her blatantly how I could become a better writer and implored her to pinpoint the major flaws that were the cause of my recurring downfall. She stated that I was a very expressive writer and that developing the ideas from the reading wasn't my downfall. However, my inability to structure an essay in the way she needed me to prepare myself for my junior year advanced placement class was the issue. She told me that if I couldn’t keep up with this pre-Ap class I should consider stepping down from the Advance placement track and take honors English instead. That was extremely disheartening because I believed I was a stellar student, and I could never imagine myself being in anything less than the top classes that they offered at my school. I think that was the first intense academic roadblock I encountered, which really pushed me to reflect that much more on my writing. I needed to take drastic steps to ensure I did well in this class, as well as secure my spot in AP English language for the next year.

The most influential step I had taken towards success was finding a writing tutor within my school. This was an extremely difficult time in my life simply because I had previously thought that tutoring was for people that were unable to keep up in classes and were in all reality “stupid”. Little did I know that this same tutoring would be what was going to save my English grade and get me into one of the best universities in the country.  My sophomore-year teacher was a senior named Sana. Sana was one of the nicest people I have met to date; she could tell I was very embarrassed about needing to get a tutor and she approached it as a friend helping another friend as suppose a smarter student helping a struggling student improve on their writing skills. Long story short those 4 months of tutoring bolstered me to the top of my Pre-Ap English class.

Fast forward to my junior year, I had miss turner who was an AP language teacher that had the reputation of being the harshest grader in the school. I knew her class would prepare me for the AP exam but at what cost? Was I able to handle my work being constantly scrutinized and critiqued? I just knew I had no choice but to start her class with a nervous but positive attitude. Walking into the first day of classes one of the first things I remembered from her mouth was “My name is Miss Turner, and I am notorious for not giving A’s which is true, you're going to have to earn it”. I spent a good portion of that class pondering what earning an A entail. In January of my junior year, I received my first 100 on an essay in Miss Turner’s Ap English class. I was astonished, I was convinced it was a fluke and it would be impossible to replicate an essay of that caliber especially since I wasn't sure of what I did to earn that grade. It only went uphill from that though, I was consecutively earning high-scoring essays in her class and performed well above my expectations on the AP exam. I was on top of the world and ended my junior year extremely confident about whatever I would be writing about for my college personal statement.

Writing essays for the college application process ended up being the most humbling experience I have ever encountered. Prior to starting the process, I had intended to write all the essays by myself because at that point I was riding on the high of the Ap exams and I had thought I was in the best writing stage of my life. My parents were the biggest advocate for me getting anybody and everybody to review any idea I was even planning on writing on a paper. I remember feeling very offended because My parents had recently read an essay of mine and I believed they thought I was still the same juvenile writer from my sophomore year. So, for the purposes of this essay, I asked my mom why she was so adamant about me getting tutorials and attending writing workshops in preparation for this essay.

Interview with Mother:

Sophie: Hey Mom, I am doing an interview for my end-of-the-year writers report, and I wanted to ask you a couple of questions regarding my essay writing skills.

Mother... Ok, what are the questions?

Sophie: Well, my primary question is just my curiosity as to why you were so adamant about me getting help for my college essays? It almost felt like you were skeptical of my ability to write it individually?

Mother: No not at all. It was only because I wanted you to put your best foot forward in the application process.

Sophie: So, you didn't believe I could do this alone based on my previous work?

Mother: If I'm being honest, it wasn't that I didn't believe in your capabilities I just knew how important the essay was and I didn't want to risk there being any issues that your dad and I couldn't catch.

Sophie: Thanks mom, as of right now would you say my writing has improved?

Mother: As for what you have sent me recently, I believe it has.

Sophie: Ok, that’s all Mom. Thank you.

I left this interview with more questions than answers. I thought my mom had a more concrete answer as to why she was that certain I needed extra help for the essays, but her answer was reasonable. However, her last question made me reflect on the progression of my essays within the scope of college-level writing. The first semester I only took one writing class which was my first-year seminar that focused on liminality within texts. I remember being nervous for that class due to the underlining insecurities I had already developed when it came to my writing, I didn't know what college-level writing was supposed to look like or what specifically my professor would be looking for. Other than talking to other students on their opinion on the matter I went to the internet in search of answers. As expected, there is a plethora of information on what it means to be a college-level writer and what is expected of me at an institution like NYU. The most useful resource I found within my research was “Writing Successfully” by North Carolina community college. I was skeptical about using that resource as a basis for starting this class because I wasn't quite sure about the credibility of the school especially since it had no correlation with NYU. Despite my doubts, it was super insightful and all the points like the statement, “Research shows that deliberate practice—that is, close focus on improving one’s skills—makes all the difference in how one performs. Revisiting the craft of writing—especially early in college—will improve your writing much more than simply producing page after page in the same old way” (NCCU). Information like that helped me clearly and adequately pinpoint areas of focus that would allow me to excel within my first-year seminar class and throughout my career at NYU.

My first writing assignment at NYU was an essay on betwixt and between liminality by victor turner. We had to use that text to develop a preliminary idea of the concept of liminality prior to delving into the concept through deeper analysis in class. This first writing task was challenging for me because prior to this class I had never heard of the concept of liminality. In order to get a good grade on the essay, I thoroughly analyzed the text by victor turner and used all the skills from articles I had previously analyzed alongside the writing effectively text by North Carolina community college. Using all those resources I was able to finish the essay and I felt pretty accomplished with the work I had submitted. Due to my feeling of accomplishment at the time of submission, I was shocked by the grade and the feedback I had received on the work I had submitted. The essay ended up receiving a B and there were a lot of comments on the analysis of the text and my use of evidence within the body paragraphs of the essay. These comments were honestly shocking because I felt as if the essay deserved an A. I went to my professor’s office hours and asked her for tips on how to improve on the next essay and get my desired grade. She gave me tips on what I could have done better on my current paper and what I should apply to my next essay. When I started the second essay, I was very discouraged because I wasn't as confident in my writing skills, but I ensured that I followed all the tips that she gave me in order to get an A. Shortly after I submitted the essay, I was pleasantly surprised to see the grade received and I felt like I was getting a hang on writing on a college level.

My next college-level writing hurdle was taking two writing classes in one semester. This was an extremely daunting task, as writing was my biggest academic insecurity. Although I got an A in my first-year seminar class, I expected writing the essay, text, and ideas to be significantly harder. Walking into writing the essay I wasn't expecting to be introduced to the writing contract. That contract gave us the opportunity to explore creative ideas while also following the rubric on every writing assignment. This contract and all the in-class writing workshops and conferences with our professor have helped my writing skills progress. After the first progression, I was advised to work on the amount of evidence and quotes I use. I used that information to build upon my second progression essay, which was significantly better.

Writing has always been the most challenging aspect of school for me. I have experienced a variety of hurdles throughout my writing career and have always taken the necessary steps in order to become a better writer. I can finally say that I am in a place where I believe that my writing is on a collegiate level, and I think it is thanks to a combination of all the help I have received and the research I have done. Some things come easier to people than others and others require a lot more attention which is fine, through practice and determination anything is possible.