

Southwest Career and Technical Academy

Tips on Writing your College Admissions Essay

Step 1. Capturing the reader's initial attention should be first and foremost on your mind.

Feed the reader something interesting and unique, and you have satisfied the first condition in mastering the admissions essay.

Step 2. A reader's concentration is held by consistent and logical flow.

Consistent flow doesn't just mean from paragraph to paragraph, it means from idea to idea, from sentence to sentence. Every idea, every word, should not be sitting on its own little island, it should be part of an interconnected stream of words that take the reader on a smooth ride from point A to point B. Often overlooked, **transitions are the easiest and most effective way to give your essay that even feel.**

Step 3. We must therefore leave the reader with a lingering thought or lasting impression that is difficult if not impossible to shake.

In order to leave your indelible mark, **you must make a connection with the reader. Something that is significant to you, can and should come across as significant to the reader.**

Step 4. Avoid these common traps.

Plato's Pitfall. *An admissions committee wants to know something about you. Do not over philosophize.*
Philosophizing about religion should be saved for college level classes, not the admissions essay.

Over use of the thesaurus

Often this only confuses readers and interrupts that consistent flow of a well written essay.

Use of your resume as an essay outline.

Many a student sees the admissions essay as an opportunity to put his or her best foot forward. The problem occurs when the aspiring college student tries to condense his or her attributes, awards, and extracurricular activities into one single literary masterpiece. **The admissions essay, however, is not a resume.** The admissions essay is an opportunity to show the admissions committee **one or two** interesting tidbits about you as a person. Attempting to jam eighteen years of accomplishments into a few sheets of paper is a harrowing task that should be held off until graduation day.

Clichés: Use these very sparingly – original ideas or statements are better.

Coming up with different ideas or a unique perspective is the challenge of any writer. This is what separates an average admissions essay from an exceptional one. Leave the reader thinking about you as an individual that will add the college community.

Source: www.IvyEdge.com

Personal Statements/Essays: Example Prompts and Hints

Your personal statement—consisting of responses to prompts—is your chance to tell the college who you are and what's important to you. Think of it as your opportunity to introduce yourself to the admissions and scholarship officers reading your application. Be open, be honest, and be real. What you tell them in your personal statement gives readers the context to better understand the rest of the information you've provided in your application.

Always read each prompt carefully and be sure to respond to all parts. Use specific, concrete examples to support the points you want to make.

Helpful hints:

Choose a topic for each essay.

Look critically at the information in your application: your grades, awards, activities and work experience, family and income. Anticipate questions an admissions evaluator will have after reading your application. The personal statement is your opportunity to answer those questions.

Compose your personal statement in a word-processing program.

Don't type it directly into the application. This way, you will have the opportunity to print copies for review.

Write in a natural style.

Present your information and ideas in a focused, thoughtful and meaningful manner. Support your ideas with specific examples. A personal statement that is simply a list of qualities or accomplishments is usually not persuasive.

Proofread.

In addition to checking your spelling, be sure your grammar is correct and your essays read smoothly.

Solicit feedback.

Your personal statement should reflect your own ideas and be written by you alone, but others--family and teachers--can offer valuable suggestions.

Copy and paste.

Once you are satisfied with your essays, save them in plain text (ASCII) and paste them into the space provided in the application. Proofread once more to make sure no odd characters or line breaks have appeared.

Ask advice of whomever you like, but do not plagiarize from sources in print or online, and do not use anyone's published words but your own.

Brainstorming for a College Application Essay

This worksheet will help you to brainstorm a list of possible topics for a college application essay. If you've made entries into MyRoad's My Plan, try using those to help you complete this worksheet. At this point, don't stop to evaluate the worth of your ideas and don't worry about complete sentences. Feel free to list several answers to a question and to skip one or two questions. You'll need more space, so use the back or another sheet of paper.

- Bring this worksheet, along with any college essay questions you've collected, to your counseling appointment.

Past (at least one year ago)

Present (one year ago–start of college)

Future (start of college and beyond)

Academic and Intellectual Life:

- Classes
- Assignments
- Books
- Anything else that's shaped your intellect

Past academic experience and how it affected me:

Present academic experience and how it affects me:

1. Major I might study in college:

2. How it's connected to experiences described in columns 1 and 2:

3. How it will help me reach a specific goal:

Extracurricular Life:

- Clubs
- Sports
- Music
- Theater
- Jobs
- Volunteering
- Internships

Past extracurricular experience and how it affected me:

Present extracurricular experience and how it affects me:

1. Extracurricular activity I might participate in at college:

2. Why does this interest me?

People and Places

Person or place that was important to me:

Person or place that is important to me:

1. In four, 10, or 20 years, I want to be:

2. Connections between who I want to be and who I am or have been:

3. How college will help me get there:

Application Essay Examples

Directly or indirectly, application essay questions ask for a story with a message - with you as the main character. As you look at each question, consider what kind of personal experience (academic, extracurricular, personal) and what time frame (past, present, future) it's asking you to draw upon. Keep in mind that if you're writing about the future, it's best to make connections to the past or present as well.

1. Describe your most rewarding or unrewarding educational experience.
2. Ask and answer your own question.
3. How do you envision your freshman year?
4. Write a page of your own autobiography.
5. Discuss an issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
6. Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you and describe that influence.
7. How do you see your world of 2020?
8. Describe how a song, poem, piece of art, book, etc. influenced your life.
9. Select two ideals listed in our literature and relate them to your personal beliefs and convictions.
10. Evaluate a significant experience or achievement that has special meaning to you.
11. How have you taken something you've learned in the classroom and integrated it into your nonacademic life?
12. If you could meet anyone, real or imaginary, who would it be?
13. How will your knowledge of other cultures affect your studies?
14. Describe a situation in which your values were challenged.
15. Describe an experience that illustrates a proverb, maxim, or quote that has special meaning to you.
16. Pick a recent event and relate it to a turning point in your life.

17. Relate your future goals to studying at our school.
18. Once you've completed your education, would you return to your hometown to begin your adult life? Why or why not?
19. Tell about an unsuccessful situation and what you learned from the experience.
20. Find a picture and write why it is important to you.
21. What are your interests, and how do you plan on continuing them in college?