

MAKE YOUR ESSAY “THE WRITE STUFF”

What do colleges
look for in an essay?



Steps to creating a winning essay

Follow these rules

- Comply with the requests of the application (essay length, format, topic).
- Answer the question that was asked.
- Send the correct essay with the correct application.
- Write your own unique essay.

Brainstorm before you write

- Write down some ideas that align with the topic.
- Choose the one that you feel is the best.

Consider your topic

- Choose one that is meaningful to you that you can write about in a personal way. Ask yourself: Could someone else have written the same essay?
- Share something personal about yourself that has not already been listed elsewhere on your application.
- Refrain from using topics that are overused, such as scoring the winning goal.
- Remember your audience. You'll be addressing adults, so you don't want to be too informal. Also, try to refrain from topics that may be sensitive such as religion or politics.

Start with an attention grabber

- Don't just repeat the topic with your introductory sentence.
- Start with the action and dive right into the story.

EXERCISE

Recount a time when you experienced failure and how you grew from that experience. *Which of the following topic sentences makes you want to continue reading?*

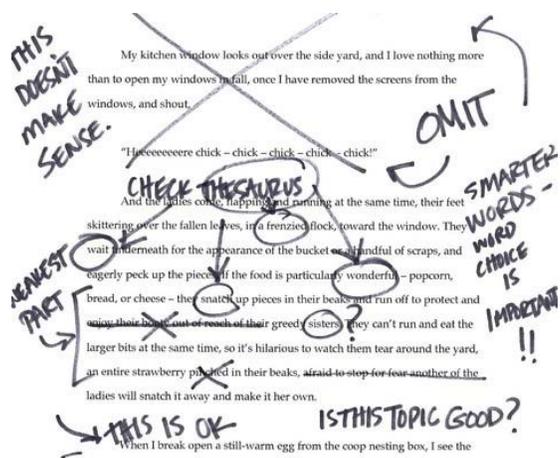
1. Fire alarms ring throughout the school, and my lab station is smothered in smoke. This was the moment I realized science was not my future field of study.
2. A time when I experienced failure was when I received my first and only failing grade in school.

Try these writing tips

- Make sure your essay sounds like you, and don't try to be someone else. Present yourself in an honest way, and you'll find it much easier to write an essay about your genuine thoughts and feelings. Don't try to answer the prompt in a way you think the reader wants to hear. Show your personality, and be you!
- Be specific and concise. Provide relevant details, but don't give unnecessary information. If it's not relevant to your story, don't include it. Answer the prompt without rambling.
- Feel free to use humor if you're funny and it's not forced. If you're not typically a funny person, don't let your essay be the first time you to crack a joke!
- Use sentence variety. You don't want to sound repetitive with the verbs that you use.
- **Don't wait until the last minute to write your essay!**

Revise, revise, revise!

Revising your essay may be the longest step in the essay writing process. Have one or two others read your essay as well to have a different point of view.



Questions to ask when revising your essay:

Content:

- How well did I answer the essay topic?
- Can the reader visualize the content in the essay?
- Is the essay entertaining?

Organization/Clarity:

- Can the reader easily follow the story?
- Did I use sentence and verb variety?
- Did I use appropriate vocabulary?

Detail:

- Are there any spelling or punctuation errors?
- Did I use the correct format?

REMEMBER

- The essay portion of your application is the only part that is completely under your control.
- Your personality and character should be reflected in your essay.
- What makes you special may not seem profound, but it will be meaningful and authentic.
- It's not meant to be your resume. The reader wants to find something out about you that he/she hasn't already read. Try not to repeat your resume.
- Tell a unique story about yourself, and keep it interesting and entertaining. Be you!

ACTION STEPS: *This is what you need to be working on now.*

Next Appointment:

Date _____ Time _____