



Your College Essay Needs These 5 Things.....

For 20 years I have been reading college essays. For 20 years, I have seen college essays that dazzle and others that are dismal. In my experience, the main worry that every applicant has is that their essay won't stand out. This is a very real concern as you will likely compete with numerous other students who have similar backgrounds. The only way to make your essay "better" (different) than everyone else's, is to follow these 5 important tips.

1. Read and understand the prompt thoroughly

Take five minutes to think about the prompt. As you begin to outline your response, make sure ***you are answering the question***. If needed, divide the prompt into phrases and look at each aspect. What do you think they want to know about you or your life experiences? How does that information relate to your ability to excel in college?

After reading, taking notes and outlining, leave it alone. Go for a run. Go see a movie. Do something to take your mind off the essay. What you are actually doing, is preparing yourself to see it differently with a fresh set of eyes.

2. Organize your paragraphs

Be very clear what each paragraph will address. Number them and give them titles. Brainstorm your anecdotes and create a rough outline, including approximately how long each paragraph needs to be in order to complete the essay within the word count limits. Finally, figure out when you're going to write. A paragraph a day? A paragraph every other day? Creating a schedule, even if you need to modify it later, gets your brain going in the right direction.



3. Telling a Story is the Best Way To Go

When selecting anecdotes for your essay, pick vivid imagery that can relay a story. You're not going to have a lot of space to express self-reflection and analysis of the situation, and admissions officers would prefer to read about your perspective of what happened than the events themselves.

In addition, keep in mind that the admissions officers don't know you personally. In order for them to get to know you, the essay must introduce who you are and what's important to you. Show them through strong examples and help them to see each example as if they're experiencing the situation alongside you.

4. Flex Your Vocabulary Muscle

Your admissions essay should show that you know how to use powerful words correctly. One of the most common mistakes that happen in college essays is that students try to use advanced words where they should not. Even among synonyms, words have variant meanings. Read the sentence aloud or even Google it to see if it makes sense. Grammarly.com is a great tool as well.

5. Make Your Writing Short and Sweet

Being succinct with your essay writing will be appreciated by all those who read it. Can you say what you need to say in fewer words? Can you substitute an advanced vocabulary word for a phrase? Writing concisely expresses to the admissions officers that you can organize your thoughts well and that you respect their time.