

Ten Tips for Writing a College Essay

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1. Realize that **what** you write and **how** you write are being evaluated. While the essay's content is important, we spend a great deal of time discussing your writing skills irrespective of the topic. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation matter.
2. Don't be aimless. Tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end. Make sure it has an ending. We like well-told stories.
3. The admission's application gives us a great deal of information. Your essay should add something new that we can't already find in the file; or at least takes something in your application and gives it more context.
4. Great topics for a personal essay: afterschool jobs, travel, volunteering, quirky hobbies, and experiences that made you learning something new about yourself.
5. Rarely is an essay about run-ins with the law, breaking school rules, or being mean to other people a good idea. Even if by the end of the essay you make a life changing revelation, you have already put a negative idea in our head and that's tough to shake.
6. Have one idea and work it. Don't try to pack too much information into 500-ish words.
7. Your essay should not be one long excuse for academic issues. If you have a rough academic record, tell us quickly what happened and then tell us why things are changing. We have seen too many essays about how "I didn't get along with my teacher." Tell us the solution, not just the problem.
8. If you are a recruited athlete, don't write about your sport. We will hear from all angles about you athletic prowess. Use the essay to show us something different about your character. Write about your love of poetry or why the Girl Scouts have changed your life.
9. The personal essay is your opportunity to inject your voice into the admissions process (assuming you can't interview). Make it count. While we have seen almost every topic and type of essay, do your best to convey the texture of who you are. Be bold.
10. Remember the essay is just one part of the application. Rarely will it make or break your chances of admissions. It's the essay in the context of your academic record that we principally debate in committee.