

Tips for Writing an Effective Application Essay

The college essay is your chance to use your voice to add to your college application. Many colleges require the essay as a way to hear from the student directly and to get a sense of who you are in your own words. It's a great opportunity to personalize your application beyond the grades, scores, and other information you've provided and can make a difference at decision time. Here are some tips to keep in mind when you're writing.

1. **Don't jump on the bandwagon.**

Don't try to guess what you think they want to read. Your essay will be easier to write—and more exciting to read—if you are genuinely passionate about your subject. For example: If all your friends are writing application essays about covid-19, that may be a good reason why you should avoid it. (Unless, of course, you've had a vivid, life-changing experience that you are burning to share.)

2. **Remember, it's all about you.**

Essay prompts are designed to give you a lot of latitude, but they expect you to focus on a subject that is personal and particular to you. Admissions counselors say that the best essays help them learn something about the candidate that they would never know from reading the rest of the application.

3. **Sound like yourself.**

Don't use words you wouldn't normally use. Don't use fancy language that you wouldn't use in real life. (Imagine yourself reading this essay out loud to a classroom full of people who have never met you.) Keep a confident tone even if—especially if—you're not feeling that way. Be on the lookout for word and phrases like “maybe,” “sort of,” “I think” or anything else that undercuts that tone.

4. **Give yourself time.**

Few people write well under pressure, so try to do your first draft a few weeks before you have to turn it in. You don't have to work on your essay every single day, but you will want to give yourself time to revise and edit. You may discover that you want to change your topic. Just get that first draft going—the sooner, the better.

5. **Be specific. Be factual.**

Capitalize on real-life experiences. This essay may give you the time and space to explain why a particular achievement meant so much to you. But resist the urge to exaggerate and embellish: admissions counselors read thousands of essays each year—they can spot a fake.

6. **Stick to the length suggested.**

On the Common App, essays have a 650-word maximum. So your application will stand out—not in a good way—if you turn in 250 words. Likewise, if you're applying to a school with a

“suggested limit” of 500 words, don’t go way over that (no matter how thrilling you think that 10,000-word story of your life might be). No suggested length? When in doubt, borrow the Common App’s 650-word limit. And, if you’re asked for supplemental essays, remember that they are usually expected to be shorter. (Whew!)

7. **Proofread, proofread, then proofread again.** When you think you’re done with that final draft, run it through the spellcheck on your computer, then do not read your essay for a few days. When you read it again with a cold eye, you’ll be more apt to spot typos and awkward grammar. After that, ask a teacher, parent, or college student to give it a quick read. (And, while you’re at it, double check your word count too.)

Reference- collegeboard.org