

Essay Writing Tips for Students

A great application essay presents a vivid, personal, and compelling view of you to the admissions committee. It rounds out the rest of your application and helps you stand out from other applicants. The essay is one of the only parts of the application over which you have complete control, so take the time to do a good job on it.

Following are some tips to help you as you write your essay:

- Write simply.
- Keep your focus narrow and personal.
- Provide specific evidence (facts, events, quotations, examples) to support your main idea.
- Use vivid, compelling details (show, don't tell).
- Address the topic squarely. For example, if an application asks you to explain any deficiencies in records (e.g., a low grade or bad semester), provide a straightforward, reasonable response.
- Don't repeat information that is found elsewhere in the application, such as lists of courses or extracurricular activities.
- Write about something unique and different—not just what you think the admissions officer wants to hear (they read many essays about the charms of their university, for example).
- Apply principles of good composition (e.g., organize the essay with a beginning, middle, and end).
- Structure your writing in a way that allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.
- Revise and proofread to make sure there are no typographical, spelling, or grammatical errors.

Source: Tips adapted from the *College Counseling Sourcebook* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 2004) based on information from *The College Application Essay*, rev. ed., by Sarah Myers McGinty (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 2004).