

Tips From College Essay Readers

The college essay is often the most difficult part of a college application. To help you, we've put together the following tips and hints. These are comments from our admission staff that read your essays and evaluate them in the admission process. We can't guarantee results, but this advice might help you refine your essay.

1. **Be yourself.** If you are funny, write a funny essay; if you are serious, write a serious essay. Make sure you don't reinvent yourself with the essay.
2. **Make it fun.** If you're recounting an amusing and light-hearted anecdote from your childhood, it doesn't have to read like a Congressional Act—make it fun!
3. **Tell us something different** from what we will read on your list of extracurricular activities or transcript.
4. **Take the time to go beyond the obvious.** Think about what most students might write in response to the question and then try something a little different.
5. **Don't try to take on too much.** Focus on one "most influential person," one event, or one activity. Tackling too much tends to make your essay too watered down or disjointed.
6. **Concentrate on topics of true significance to you.** Don't be afraid to reveal yourself in your writing. We want to know who you are and how you think.
7. **Write thoughtfully and from your heart.** It'll be clear who believes in what they are saying versus those who are simply saying what they think we want to hear.
8. **Essays should have a thesis** that is clear to you and to the reader. Your thesis should indicate where you are going and what you are trying to communicate from the outset.
9. **Don't write a history report.** Some background knowledge is okay, but nothing too lengthy.
10. **Proofread, proofread, and proofread again.** Nothing says "last-minute essay" like an "are" instead of "our" or a "their" instead of "there."
11. **Keep it short** and to the point.
12. **Limit the number of people** from whom you request feedback on your essay. Too much input creates an essay that sounds as though it has been written by a committee or results in writing that is absent your own voice.
13. **Appearances count.** Formatting and presentation cannot replace substance, but they can certainly enhance the value of an already well-written essay.