



Make Your Essays Pop:
College Application Essay Checklist
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iPhone & iPad app and Google App:
All College Application Essays

Working on the drafts of your personal statements for your college applications? The drafting process is critical and can help make your stories and messages clearer. Please be willing to draft and re-write to make your essays stronger.

Here are 10 questions to help guide you through the editing process. I hope they can help make your stories pop on the page and help you get admitted to your match colleges and receive lots of scholarship money.

1. Does your essay start with a story that hooks us in from the first paragraph?
2. If you start in the past, do you get to the present very quickly? Colleges want to know about the recent you. Great essays can start more recently and weave in past events.
3. Do you write only in the first person and not spend too much time describing anyone or anything else? Use my one-third-two-third rule. You may not spend more than 1/3 of the essay describing anything other than your own activities and goals.
4. If you are writing about your community or family, do you get to the present and your life and life works quickly? Can this description only connect to you and your story of who are you and how you are making a difference?
5. Do you only tell one story and not try to tell your entire life story?
6. If you are writing about an obstacle or challenge overcome, do you get to how you have responded and made a difference in the life of your community by the second or third paragraph of the essay? Admissions officers want to know who are you and how you make an impact drawing upon your obstacles or challenges.
7. Do you have a metaphor that goes through the entire piece...does this metaphor reveal who you are and what you offer to potential colleges? You can embed this metaphor throughout out your piece.
8. Can I close my eyes and picture your story? Does it make you sound unique and not like anyone else applying? Can I see your leadership and initiative and the power of what you will offer a college campus?
9. Do you tell new stories and qualities in each separate essay you write? Do you make sure to reveal powerful information and core messages that colleges will need to know to admit you and give you money to attend?
10. Endings-Do you end with a bang? Do you make it clear by the end you have goals and aspirations that drive you. Your endings must be specific for some prompts like the University of California and University of Texas, but can be more oblique and implied in Common Application and many supplementary essays. Do you end leaving the reader with the desire to get to know you more, to see you on his or her campus, and to share your essay with someone else?