

## Top 15 Essay Tips from Admissions' Readers

- The essay is one of the few things that you've got complete control over in the application process, especially by the time you're in your senior year. You've already earned most of your grades; you've already made most of your impressions on teachers; and chances are, you've already found a set of activities you're interested in continuing. So when you write the essay, view it as something more than just a page to fill up with writing. View it as an opportunity to tell the admissions committee about who you are as a person.
- Be yourself. If you are funny, write a funny essay; if you are serious, write a serious essay. Do not start reinventing yourself with the essay.
- 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!
- Tell us something different from what we will read on your list of extracurricular activities or transcript.
- 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.
- Don't try to take on too much. Focus on one influential person, one event, or one activity. Tackling too much tends to make your essay too watered down or disjointed.
- 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.
- 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.
- Essays should have a thesis that is clear to you and to the reader. Your thesis should indicate where you're going and what you're trying to communicate from the outset.
- Don't do a history report. Some background knowledge is okay, but do not re-hash what other authors have already said or written.
- Answer each school's essay individually. Recycled “utility essays” come across as impersonal and sanitized. The one exception is an essay written for and submitted to Common Application member schools.
- Proofread, proofread, and proofread. Nothing says “last-minute essay” like an “are” instead of “our” or an “its” instead of “it's.”
- Keep it short and to the point.
- 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
- Appearance cannot replace substance, but it can certainly enhance the value of an already well-written essay.



The bane of every college applicant:  
the admissions essay.