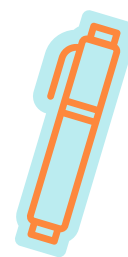


5 THINGS ADMISSIONS OFFICERS WISH PARENTS KNEW ABOUT THE COLLEGE ESSAY

Helping your teen with their college essay isn't easy — you want to guide, not ghostwrite. These five tips reveal what admissions officers really hope parents understand: how to inspire, support, and step back so your teen's authentic voice shines through.

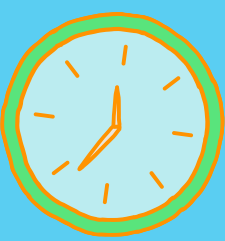
1. Show don't tell.

Telling a story by simply listing events doesn't allow the reader to connect emotionally with the student. "Showing" involves using description, rhythm, drama, vulnerability, and other techniques to convey emotion and draw the reader into the student's personal experience. Colleges aren't expecting to read Hemingway but they do want to feel something when reading the essay. Writing to elicit emotion can be new for many students. Encourage your student to flex their creative writing muscles beforehand by researching their favorite song lyrics, poems, or intro paragraphs to their favorite book. This can help them think creatively about their own writing, and can lead to crafting a more engaging essay.



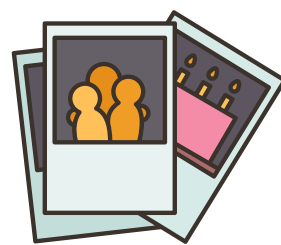
2. Spend extra time on the opening sentence.

We all know the importance of first impressions — well, this is that but on steroids. College reviewers are reading dozens of essays a day (or more!). If the opening sentence doesn't grab them, and give them a compelling reason to continue reading, they likely won't. Encourage your student to craft an opening sentence that not only piques the reader's interest but also offers immediate insight into your student's life, personality, or way of thinking.



3. It's not an autobiography.

The college essay should focus on the student. While it's acceptable for them to include details from their past, the primary aim is to demonstrate who they are presently. Ensure the story revolves around the student themselves — not a family member or someone they admire. While these individuals can play a role in the narrative, it's crucial that the student remains at the center of their essay. This is the student's opportunity to tell the college who they are beyond the data on their transcript. Encourage your student to write confidently about themselves.



4. Be aware of your limitations.

We all know, as parents, it's hard to offer unbiased opinions of our children. I once had a student send me an essay and say, "I don't want to brag, but it made my dad cry." Truth be told, the essay was way off base. She'd clearly spent very little time on it, listed a ton of adjectives about herself — as if writing a résumé — and frankly, came across as full of herself. Those are three things colleges do not want in an essay. When helping with your student's college essay, it's a good idea to seek outside perspectives and support — whether from school resources or a professional coach.



5. Understand the perils of having you, their uncle — or AI — write it for them.

College review boards can tell when a student's words aren't their own, especially once they see the full picture of an application. And even if a student could get away with using AI or a family ghostwriter, it's a huge disservice. It sends the message that they're not capable or not enough — when in truth, this process is one of the most valuable opportunities for self-discovery. Writing their own essay helps teens reflect, take ownership, and prepare for the kind of independent learning colleges expect. Encourage your student to dig deep, spend the time, and do the work. The goal isn't a perfect essay — it's growth, confidence, and a story that's genuinely theirs.



HELP YOUR STUDENT WITH ACE THE ESSAY.

There's so much to consider when helping your student apply to college. This is just a short list to help parents prepare. Having a partner who has your teen's best interest at heart — while giving you some breathing room — can make all the difference.