

# 500 WORDS THAT WILL HELP YOU GET INTO COLLEGE

15

(scribendi.com)

Writing your college admissions essay can definitely be stressful. With so many other qualified candidates applying, this one little essay can often mean the difference between being accepted to the school of your dreams and never moving out of your parents' basement.

But don't let that scare you away from trying! Think of your college admissions essay as an opportunity to stand out from other applicants and really make an impression. With some planning and careful consideration, you can draft a great college admissions essay that will vastly improve your chances of being accepted to the college of your choice.

## 1. Don't write an autobiography

Make sure to give your essay a solid theme or thesis. Sometimes a college may specify a topic for you, other times they may let you choose your own; either way, make sure your focus is both narrow and personal. Remember you may only have 500 words.

Pick one story or event in your life to focus on; don't try to cover everything and don't ramble. Don't write a resume or list your accomplishments; this information can be found elsewhere in your application. Your college admissions essay should tell a clear and engaging story, perhaps one about overcoming a difficult time in your life, getting your first pet, or where your love of gardening comes from.

## 2. Show your personality

Try to view the college admissions essay portion of your application as an opportunity to highlight who you are as an individual. This is the time to let your passions and personality really shine through. The application gives the admissions officer facts about you, but the college admissions essay tells him or her who you really are.

Show the admissions officer you are mature, thoughtful, and responsible. Other qualities he or she will be looking for include empathy, confidence, creativity, persistence, and organization.

## 3. Have a great opener

Be sure to have a great lead to your essay. Consider starting it off with a relevant quote, anecdote, question, or brief story. Grab the reader's attention and make him or her want to read your college admissions essay, not put it at the bottom of the pile!

## 4. Make the admissions officer smile

Don't be afraid to add a little humor to your essay—but just a touch! You don't want the admissions officer thinking you aren't taking the task seriously. However, a well-placed witticism can lighten an especially deep or personal essay.

## 5. Make every word count

College admissions essays often have a very limited word count, so make the most of every word. Avoid being overly wordy; simple language often conveys your meaning best. Watch out for vague or meaningless sentences and be especially aware of unintended meanings.

## 6. Avoid clichés

Nothing can ruin a great piece of writing like a cliché; it sounds lazy and it can seem as though you're trying to make up for poor content. Look at any comparisons or analogies and avoid being corny or predictable. You want the person reading your college admissions essay to think you are smart, fresh, and creative; you don't want the reader rolling his or her eyes at an overused simile.

## **7. Show, don't tell**

Make sure you are being specific. Don't just say your mission to Guatemala opened your eyes and leave it at that; describe how working with orphaned children really changed your perspective on Western life and why. Use facts, quotations, and examples to tell your story.

## **8. Edit**

You can't just write one draft of your college admissions essay and think it will be ready to send. Start by writing a rough draft. Don't worry about quality at this stage. After you've completed your rough draft, take some time away from it and start again with fresh eyes. When you are editing your admissions essay, don't look at particulars like spelling and grammar; rather, look at the college admissions essay as a whole. Find your essay's weaknesses and work on those.

## **9. Proofread**

Once satisfied with your revised college admissions essay, it's time to proofread for clarity, spelling, and grammar. Ask someone else to review your paper. Writers are often unable to see mistakes in their own work, so having someone else check your essay will double your chances of catching any stray errors. Our admissions essay editors will examine your college admissions essay and ensure it is not only free of errors, but that it also makes sense.

## **10. Take your time**

Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to write your college admissions essay; don't expect to write it the night before you need to submit your application. Allow yourself plenty of time to brainstorm ideas, write the initial draft, revise, and edit your application. The earlier you begin, the better your essay will be.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that you can do this. All you need to do is relax and enjoy telling your story!