

College Admission Essay Tips

Eight Steps to an Effective Essay

Many colleges require essays as part of a student's admission application. Since admissions officials read many essays, it is important for a prospective student to create a positive impression. Originality, content, word choice, grammar, and structure are all important elements of an effective essay. The following steps can improve a student's chances of gaining admittance.

1. **Know the prompt:** Read any given prompt carefully. Do not stray from an assigned topic.
2. **Be imaginative:** Strive to make your essay unique and interesting. Do not avoid controversial stances. Tailor your essay to the specific university. Provide some insight into your own personality. Do not embellish facts or plagiarize information.
3. **Edit carefully:** If the purpose of the essay is to inform, is evidence presented accurately and coherently? If the purpose is to persuade, is the argument presented logically with supporting evidence? Provide as many specific examples and details as possible.
4. **Follow guidelines:** Adhere to specified word counts and follow any formatting and submission requirements.
5. **Avoid humor:** Unless an amusing experience or anecdote is compelling and directly related to the prompt, humor can prove risky.
6. **Follow an outline:** Your essay should have an interesting introduction and a thesis that clearly identifies the prompt. Essays usually require more than one paragraph, so make certain that your ideas flow in a logical order. Your conclusion should be emphatic, logical, and memorable.
7. **Use formal language but write naturally:** Write clearly and concisely. Avoid slang terms, conjunctions, and fancy Thesaurus words. Avoid second-person (you, your) references unless the prompt necessitates their use, such as giving directions, tips, or steps.
8. **Proofread:** Do not trust a spelling or grammar program for punctuation or word choice. Make certain that your sentences are punctuated correctly and that you have spelled all names accurately and used all terms appropriately.