



College Scholarship / Admission Essay



Tips for College Admission/Scholarship Essays

What Do “They” Look For?

Admissions officers review numerous applications, frequently reading as many as fifty per day. Although it's impossible to predict exactly what a particular college is looking for in its applicants, colleges generally want to admit a mix of students who can handle the academic workload and make a positive contribution to the college experience--for themselves and for their classmates.

- To get a favorable reaction from admissions officers, your application should demonstrate:
- Serious intent to pursue a college-level education
- Genuine desire to attend the particular college
- Correspondence between your abilities and interests and what the school needs and has to offer
- Ability to think clearly, logically, and creatively
- Ability to write interesting, thoughtful essays that keep your reader's attention and make you stand out from other applicants

What Admissions Officers Look For

- **You** - The person behind the GPA, the test scores, and the extracurricular activities.
- **Surprise** - An unexpected angle on your topic, even if the experience you're writing about seems ordinary.
- **Genuineness** - Writing as yourself, without taking yourself too seriously; relying on your own vocabulary, rather than the thesaurus or the words your parents think you should use. Whatever you do, don't lie. Lying can provide grounds for automatic rejection. No matter how confident you are that you won't get caught, never fudge the facts in an essay or on any other part of your application.
- **Thoughtfulness** - Consideration of your experiences and their meanings, both to yourself and to others, and showing through your reflection that nothing is lost on you.

How To Help Them Find It

Think About Who Your Audience Is – This will most likely be five or six recent graduates of the college you're applying to and an experienced director of admissions, all of whom have spent the last month reading thousands of applications. This is an overworked audience on whom your essay needs to make a vivid and memorable impression.

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Think About Your Purpose - Not “selling yourself ” or “getting in,” but simply being yourself-- which usually means writing about yourself in human, rather than superhuman, terms. For example, if your transcript reveals that you are a stellar student of French, you might write about the time a Parisian pointedly responded in English to your request in French for directions to the Louvre.

Focus - Instead of generalizing your experience, for example saying something like, “I enjoy sports”, be as specific as you can be. Write about the thrill of catching a fly ball deep to centerfield just before it became a home run, or of a Little League career spent waiting for someone, anyone, to hit the ball to your position so that you could stop studying the grass and watching the butterflies.

Use Precise And Descriptive Language - Imagine that each word you write costs you a dollar, and that you don’t have unlimited funds. Instead of writing “On a yearly basis, we would spend five hours driving to the lake, where I never gave up the hope of meeting the boy that would be my Prince Charming,” write “Every August, we trekked to Lake Apponaug, where I always hoped to meet my Prince Charming.”

Give Your Essay Momentum - Make the parts work together and move toward a thoughtful conclusion. In an essay about the summer you spent working in a marine research laboratory, a paragraph on the unreliable bus that took you there each day should be eliminated.

Use Correct Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation - Don’t distract your reader from what you’re stating by stating it incorrectly. Misspellings, typos, and grammatical errors--such as subjects that don’t agree with verbs--make the reader’s task more difficult and suggest that you don’t care much about the impression you make. Although nobody’s perfect, strive for perfection on your application. Unfortunately, your reader may interpret your mistakes, no matter how innocent, to be signs of laziness, indifference, or even dishonesty.