

COLLEGE ESSAY BLUEPRINT

2023



Step by step guide for writing a
memorable personal statement

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APPLICATION OVERVIEW

The personal statement is just one of the major pieces of your application.

Admissions committees review a student's application holistically, considering the essays, test scores, cumulative GPA, transcript and course selections.

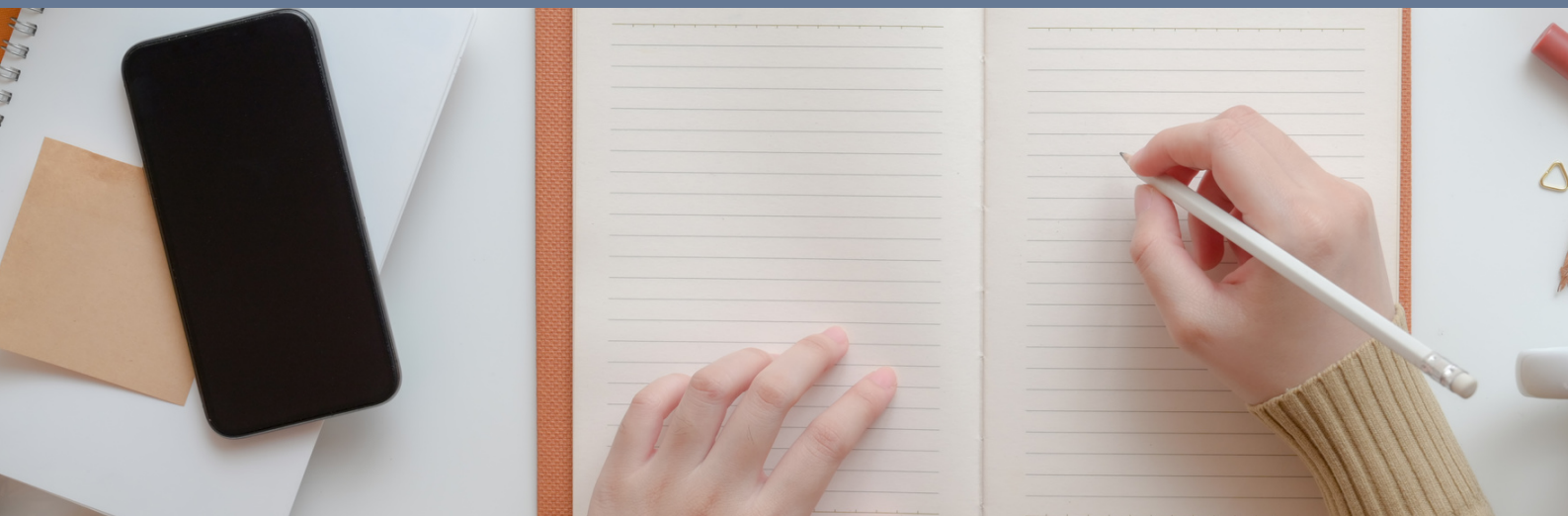
They also value letters of recommendation and your activity list or resume.

A student's academic profile; transcript, class rank and standardized test scores, are critical and will largely impact your admissions decision.

Admission officers will look at the course offerings from your high school through your School Profile. The School Profile is submitted by your school counselor with your transcript. With this information they will examine if the applicant has taken full advantage of all opportunities offered.

College admission officers also will look at the rigor of your courses you took. They are impressed by students who challenge themselves with a strenuous course load filled with AP and college level courses.

Though many schools have taken a test optional approach, testing is important and often required for higher level programs such as BS/MD.



ESSAY PURPOSE

The essay is your chance to add something new to your application and stand out among other applicants who may have similar academic profiles.

Avoid reiterating things that can be easily found elsewhere on your application. Don't try to summarize all your extracurricular activities and accomplishments - this information is already in your activity section or attached resume.





ESSAY TOPIC

The essay topic should be something unique to you. A story from your past that brought insight, or something that defines you as an individual. The topic does not need to be something monumental and the best stories are often derived from an average event.

The topic can be:

- a personal journey
- an encounter that changed you in some way
- a story of how you found a solution to a problem
- your quest for truth
- a personal story of something that has helped shaped you
- an experience that led you to your chosen major

Consider the following brainstorming Questions to help you decide your topic:

- What makes your family different from other families?
- Do you have a special family tradition?
- What single achievement are you most proud of?
- Describe a time you felt empathy for someone else.
- Has helping someone changed your perspective?
- What do you aspire to be?
- What do you hope to be doing 10 years from now?
- What is the greatest challenge you have overcome?
- Describe a time you were out of your comfort zone.

ESSAY LAYOUT

The Personal Statement should be written in a narrative form. It can be a non-traditional format or traditional with an opening, body and conclusion.

Opening Paragraph

The opening paragraph must grab the reader's attention. It must be riveting and leave them wanting to read more.

Keep in mind, each admission officer reads essays for eight to ten hours a day during application season. In order for your essay to jump off the page and into the admit pile, it must be memorable and personable.

Our favorite opening paragraphs involve a snippet of a larger story: an anecdote.

The anecdote should be a short story about a real experience in your life. Anecdotes are a personal way to open the essay. The anecdote can detail a conversation, encounter, or any moment in time that had an impact on you.

A good opening paragraph plunges the reader right in the middle of your story.

Hook your reader with a personal story. Make them want to keep reading to find out where this story is leading.

Describe a problem, situation or encounter in your life. Make the reader feel like they were there with you.

Detail the five senses.

1. **What did you see?**
2. **What did you smell?**
3. **What did you hear?**
4. **How did it feel?**
5. **What did it taste like?**

The opening must be gripping and leaving them wanting to find out more.

End the opening paragraph with a hook. The last sentence must be thought-provoking.



Body Paragraph

The body is where we get into the details. Elaborate on the opening paragraph. At the same time, highlight your personal qualities. Show the admission staff what type of person you are. Show them through your story.

The essay is a time to SHOW, not TELL. Many students spell things out in a blunt way in their essays. Instead, use your story to communicate the message you want the admissions staff to hear. Paint a picture with your words.

Show, don't tell.

Closing Paragraph

The closing paragraph is the second most important piece of your essay, right behind the opening paragraph. It must tie everything together.

Avoid these words. They are boring and state the obvious.

- In conclusion
- In summary
- Finally

It's the solution to your personal struggle. How did you cope? How did you move forward? How did you come out a stronger person as a result?



THE DETAILS

Best practices for metaphors, similes, verbs, exclamation points, adjectives and grammar:

- **Don't use a metaphor you have heard before**
 - Example:
 - couch potato
 - early bird
 - cold feet
- **Create your own unique metaphor**
 - Example:
 - lion temperament
 - zigzag emotions
- **Don't use cliché similes**
 - Example:
 - white as snow
 - bright as the sun
 - straight as an arrow
- **Avoid using weak verbs**
 - Example:
 - to go
 - Try these instead
 - Replace "to go" or "to walk"
 - stroll
 - hike
 - skip
 - stride

The goal is to allow the reader to visualize the story you are telling

- **Don't load up on too many adjectives**
 - They can weigh the sentence down and place more effort on the reader.
 - Choose adjectives wisely - try for ones that evoke emotion or appeal to the senses.
- **Don't use exclamation points in excess**
 - Instead, try finding a stronger word
- **Tighten your sentences and cut out unnecessary words**
- **Check your spelling and grammar**
 - We love [Grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com)

