

How to Write a Good College Application Essay

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Here are some tips compiled from experts for writing that all-important application essay, which can often mean the difference between getting accepted — or rejected — by the school of your choice.

The essay is your megaphone — your view of the world and your ambitions. It's not just a resume or a regurgitation of everything you've done. It needs to tell a story with passion, using personal, entertaining anecdotes that showcase your character, your interests, your values, your life experiences, your views of the world, your ambitions and even your sense of humor.

Emphasize volunteer work or other ways you've helped people or made your community a better place. It helps if the activity is related to the subject you want to study. For example, Christopher Rim of Command Education Group, which coaches students, remembers that one student who wanted to become a dentist set up a nonprofit and held fund-raisers to distribute toothbrushes, toothpaste and other dental products to homeless shelters. Admissions staff members want to know how your presence will make the college a better place.

Mention internships, summer courses, extracurricular activities or lab work that show steps you've taken to learn and understand your field of interest. That will help show you know the field you've chosen to study and are passionate about it.

Explain with knowledge and passion why you want to study at this particular college rather than at others. Tell why the school's size, curriculum, social atmosphere, location, professors or history influenced your choice.

Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation are critical. Use grammar, syntax and writing with a level of sophistication that shows you're ready for college. Never use text-style abbreviations or rude or profane language.

After the essay is submitted, check your email and voice mail daily to make sure you see and respond promptly to messages from admissions staff members. Many students check only texts and sometimes miss emails asking follow-up questions or requesting an interview.

Hafeez Lakhani of Lakhani Coaching summed up the essay this way: "Every college is like a dinner table. What will make you the most interesting contributor to that dinner table conversation? What will make you help everyone else have a more interesting experience?" A good essay, rich with anecdotes and personality,

will answer those questions and stand out from the pile.

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