

COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAY

FORMAT

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 “Every year, 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.

