Tips on Writing your College Admissions Essay

Step 1. Capturing the reader’s initial attention should be first and foremost on your mind.

Now, after reading that first sentence can you guess the topic of the essay? Don’t have a clue? Well, that is the entire point. An admissions essay doesn’t have to spell things out for the reader. You don’t need a topic sentence or an executive summary like we are taught to do in school for research or term papers. An admissions essay is a different type of animal. Feed the reader something interesting and unique, and you have satisfied the first condition in mastering the admissions essay.

Step 2. A reader’s concentration is held by consistent and logical flow.

Consistent flow doesn’t just mean from paragraph to paragraph, it means from idea to idea, from sentence to sentence. Every idea, every word, should not be sitting on its own little island, it should be part of an interconnected stream of words that take the reader on a smooth ride from point A to point B. Often overlooked, transitions are the easiest and most effective way to give your essay that even feel. Here’s an illustrative example of poor flow:

Once your reader finally approaches the end of their literary journey, but one task remains- you must craft a “Lasting Impression” Conclusion. For what good is your essay if nobody remembers it?

Step 3. We must therefore leave the reader with a lingering thought or lasting impression that is difficult if not impossible to shake.

In order to leave your indelible mark, you must make a connection with the reader. A connection isn’t necessarily forged by the fact that you saved the world from famine, or that you won the Nobel prize for literature. Something that is significant to you, can and should come across as significant to the reader.

Step 4. Avoid these common traps.

Plato’s Pitfall. An admissions committee wants to know something about you. Do not over philosophize. Philosophizing about religion should be saved for college level classes, not the admissions essay.

Over use of the thesaurus

Often this only confuses readers and interrupts that consistent flow of a well written essay.

Use of your resume as an essay outline.

Many a student sees the admissions essay as an opportunity to put his or her best foot forward. The problem occurs when the aspiring college student tries to condense his or her attributes, awards, and extracurricular activities into one single literary masterpiece. The admissions essay, however, is not a resume. The admissions essay is an opportunity to show the admissions committee one or two interesting tidbits about you as a person. Attempting to jam eighteen years of accomplishments into a few sheets of paper is a harrowing task that should be held off until graduation day.

Clichés. Use these very sparingly – original ideas or statements are better.

Coming up with different ideas or a unique perspective is the challenge of any writer. This is what separates an average admissions essay from an exceptional one. Leave the reader thinking about you as an individual that will add the college community.

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