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Turn Personal Essay Writing Into *Easy* Writing

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What Makes an Effective College Admission Essay?

Where to begin? Start with the end in mind. Ask yourself, "What is the goal of the essay? What do I want to achieve? What do I want the reader to know about me that they can't tell from my transcripts, test scores, activity sheet, and resume?"

What to do?

1. Be sure to answer the question/address the prompt.
2. Stay within the word limit.
3. Be authentic. The reader wants to get to know the real you.
4. Show your unique character and values. Tell a story that only YOU can tell. That way the reader will know what sets you apart from all the other applicants.
5. Place the emphasis on YOU (for example, how YOU felt, what YOU learned, how YOU changed). DO NOT put the emphasis on what happened or other people that are in your story.
6. Show your passion. The reader wants to know what you care about.
7. Create an **emotional, not an intellectual**, connection with the reader.
8. Demonstrate good grammar, structure and focus.

DO NOT:

1. List your achievements
2. Regurgitate your transcript
3. Write about your whole life
4. Brag or boast
5. Make excuses or whine
6. Discuss a huge topic like how to create world peace. Your topic should be much more personal and manageable.

What Makes an Effective Story?

Your Checklist

Strong Beginning	Start off strong. Capture the reader's attention.
Context	Set the scene. Think of a movie and its opening shot.
Details	Be specific, not vague or general. Use imagery and texture and visual words.
Dialogue	Give your characters a voice. Let the reader hear what they say and what they sound like.
Turning Point	What happened that changed the course of your life or the path you were on? For example, was there a conflict? Or a time when you had to make a big decision? Or a crisis?
What's at stake?	How did you change? Why did you have to?
Pacing	This refers to the speed and rhythm of the story. To slow it down, use longer sentences and more description. To speed it up, use shorter sentences and rapid dialogue.
Tone	Don't be negative or complain or whine. Don't boast or brag.
Strong Ending	Your ending should be focused and have a clear direction – it should not be rambling.

Ideas To Help You Find An Essay Topic

1. Describe your favorite day ever. Write about what happened and why it is so memorable.
2. When have you been surprised? By someone else? Or by yourself?
3. When have you made a mistake? What did you learn? What would you do differently?
4. Describe an adversity you have faced. Why was it a challenge? How did you overcome it? How did that experience change you?
5. Choose a time when you did something that took a lot of courage. This could be a time when you didn't follow your friends, or a time when you stood up for your beliefs. Why did you decide to make a stand or try something that took courage?
6. Teaching someone else how to do something can be rewarding. Think of a skill that you've taught someone else how to do. Think about the events that made up the process of teaching the skill, and narrate the story for your readers.
7. Think about an event in your life that seemed bad when it happened, but turned out to be good. Tell the story of the event that you experienced. Help the reader understand how an event that seemed negative turned out to have valuable consequences.