



College Applications: Essay Tips

Share via [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#) [e](#)

Continuing our series on College Application Personal Statements, here are some tips from professionals about how to best catch the eyes of admission officers:

STEF MAULER

Stef Mauler is the founder of [The Mauler Institute, LLC](#), a college consulting firm, and author of [The Complete Candidate: A Comprehensive System for Solving the College Admissions Puzzle](#). Stef has a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a Graduate Degree in College Counseling from University of California, San Diego and has acted as an alumni interviewer for both Harvard and UPenn.

Make an Impact in the First Sentence: Remember that admissions officers in the height of application season may read close to a hundred essays a day, and many of them are dull, lack originality and are poorly written. Your essay needs to scream "I'm here. I'm memorable. After reading me, you will remember why you love your job." The first sentence has the power to do just that. Make it provocative. Draw your reader in. Make admissions officers want to read your essay. Here are some of my favorites:

"When I was 10 years old, I ran away to join the circus."

"They say life can change in a moment's notice. Mine did last year."

HEATHER PARRY

Heather Parry is an independent college counselor in Seattle. Previously, she worked in admissions at University of Washington and Claremont McKenna College, and as a recruiter for interns at Amazon.

Students should be sure that key elements of their personality or core values come through in the essay. For example, are you independent, creative, a good mediator? Sometimes it can be valuable to start the brainstorming process by focusing on what you'd want the admission counselor to know about you, and then work your way backwards. Students should have a friend or family member read the essay and state which personality traits or values stand out. This is a great way to ensure you are going below the surface of just telling a story. Highlight what makes you tick and what qualities you have that will make you successful in college.

LAUREN HERSKOVIC

Lauren Herskovic is the Chief Operating Officer at [Admissionado](#), an Admissions Mentoring and Consulting Company based in Chicago and Beijing. After grabbing college by the horns, she's dedicated herself to helping others crack the college admissions process, and gain the same invaluable experiences she was fortunate enough to have.

Don't play it safe! An admissions officer is going to take 5-10 minutes to review your application. Yup, that's it! And that's after they've read about a thousand other applications. A boring and generic essay about your accomplishments will be forgotten as quickly as it was tossed back into the pile. You must remember that the admissions officers are humans with emotions, not robots, and they've seen it all. So get creative. They won't remember the guy with the 2100 on his SAT and a 4.0 GPA, but they will remember the guy who wrote an essay about his love for bacon.

REECY ARESTY

Reecy Aresty is the author of the critically acclaimed [How To Pay For College Without Going Broke](#), an invaluable parent/student manual. Reecy is a veteran radio and TV guest who for the past 36 years has been pioneering a topic of immense concern to millions of families, namely how to send their kids to the college of their choice for less than they ever imagined.

The topic chosen and its degree of difficulty say volumes to the school about the character of the writer. Students writing about their favorite anything should be passionate about it. It's not enough just to say you love something. You must explain why in no uncertain terms. Never lose focus. If writing about how a certain relative was the most admired individual you ever knew, factor in how he or she had an effect on you, and just how you may have fashioned yourself after them, and perhaps how they changed the direction of your life.