

How to write KICKASS essays!

a guide by shuge lu

WRITING YOUR ESSAY

- Read the program description. ***Does it invigorate you? Does it send sparks of fire down your spine?*** If yes, move on. I always read the program description before I write so I stay inspired. If not, think about your reasons for applying; is it parental pressure, peer influence, a desire to satisfy others. Do your motivations come from within? Do you really have a good one?
- Read the prompt once. Now, read it again. Finally, read it a third time. This ensures that you will address every single part of the prompt.
- Brainstorm. Don't be strict with yourself. Just write and write and write. Think about anything. Maybe sit upside down on your couch. Look at your old journal/blog/website/any writing. Look at your pictures, it may spark something.
- **WRITE.** Choose an incident that you like and let the words flow from within. If you are stuck, take a break and come back to it. Otherwise, just write. You don't have to care about grammar right now, it can be edited. **Stay raw, authentic and real.** People can see when you're writing to impress. **Write to express.**
 - Tip: If you don't want to write, talk it out. I record myself talking into my phone and later transcribe it. Google doc also has voice typing which you could try. Talking allows for a much more fluid experience since it is non-constrictive.
 - Write with **ENTHUSIASM**. Enthusiasm comes from the roots enthous which means inspired by god, so let your INNER GOD shine. If you're not passionate about this piece of text, it will come across. **Let your words be chocked full of vitality.**
 - **Tell a story.** It will be a much more riveting read when you narrate instead of making broad claims that applies to anyone. Think of it as a conversation between you and the reader. They're trying to get to know you better so show them.
- Think about **double speak**: the lines you write serves double meaning. Always think about what this incident/story/line of text showcases about you. So it's not really about WHAT you write, but more about HOW you write.

- For example, if I write about how bad my jokes are and that they send people running outside of the room, is my intention really to show how bad my jokes are? Nah, it's to show them how good of a writer I am.

EDITING YOUR ESSAY

- Interact with the words in different ways.
 - Read it at different times such as night, day, dawn.
 - Use varying mediums. Print your essay and edit it on paper VS making edits on the computer. Record yourself saying your essay and listen to it while taking notes. Change the font. **Change the font size. Play with formatting** to look at the ideas you want to emphasize. if you have a projector, project it on or look at it on a big screen (TV).
- Note the significance of tenses
 - Play around with tenses. A past perfect tense conveys a very different story than past tense. Past perfect signifies continuity while past tense signifies closure.
- The art of rhetoric
 - You have a word limit so every single word matters. Your purpose is to tell them a story. **Therefore, imbue your words with meaning!**
 - SHOW, NOT TELL. **You're not happy, you're radiating with warmth from within!** I'm not just telling you how to write an essay, I'm showing you with examples.
 - Think of your writing as mental manipulation. Your reader cannot see you and there is a wall. However, your words penetrate that wall and tells them all about you. **Your writing goes beyond present the cold hard facts, but is a mixture of logos, ethos and pathos.** When you're editing, be meta-aware of the purpose of the sentence. If you're stuck, ask someone else to think out loud while reading your essay. This process is known as metacognition.
- Eliminating the usage of I
 - The problem with personal essays is that there is an abundance of I. It will start to sound redundant. Try to find different ways to express the same idea.
- Edit out grammar errors.
 - I usually do this last since my ideas tend to shift around and it would be a waste of time if I don't even end up using that piece of text. I'm not the best with standard English conventions so I read my writing out loud and

listen for errors. I also ask my English teachers and English-adept friends to look at it. Lastly, I use online writing checkers such as grammarly.

- Do not overlook this. if you have mistakes scattered all around, they will be bulging right out of the paper shouting at your reader.
- Sought help from others!
 - Don't be scared of asking for peer edits. Reach out through the studyblr community, college confidential essay forums, or even me!
 - Ask trustworthy friends and family members. Include teachers and upperclassmen.

SAMPLE

BEFORE

repetition of I
dead word
good
grammar
I've always enjoyed subjects that I was good at. I was good at it, I received compliments, my ego felt good, so I wanted to improve even more; it was a self-perpetuating process, one that continued oneself. For me, that was always the technical subjects such as math and sciences. They were straightforward and encouraged a linear train of thought, much more pragmatic than their humanities counterparts: literature and social science. Literature was my arch nemesis, not only did it make no sense, it was full of prose and dissections, abstract theories that was never applied. Who would ever use literature in their life?

need to capitalize
internal irony as this text is prose
so how will the reader perceive me now?

AFTER

nourishing self vs feeling good

I've always enjoyed subjects that I was good at; I have excelled at them, I have received compliments, my ego has felt nourished, and I have wanted to improve even more. It was a self-perpetuating process, a self-contained cycle of interest and reward. For me, that was always the technical subjects such as Math and Science. They were straightforward and encouraged a linear train of thought, much more pragmatic than their humanities counterparts, Literature and Social Science. Nevertheless, while Literature used to be my arch nemesis, I have grown to appreciate its value. Whereas before it was senseless, full of epistrophe and incongruence, now it has delivered me to a deeper understanding of others.

connotation

double speak: by showing my knowledge of epistrophes and incongruence, I demonstrate my literary knowledge