

The College Application Essay

Help! If I don't write the perfect essay
I won't get in!

Or will I?



Main Points

- The essay in the the larger context
- The topic

The Big Picture

The essay...

- is just ONE of many components of the application.
- alone will not get you in.
- is most important for applicants in the middle range.

Make a Good Impression

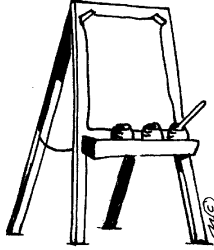
- Draw a picture in the reader's mind.
- Make the reader think, "I want to meet this person."
- Write an essay that only you can write.
- Let your personal voice come through.

Voice

"In reading all of your writing, we want to hear your individual voice. Write essays that reflect who you are; use specific concrete details and write in a natural style. Begin work on these essays early, and feel free to ask your parents, teachers, and friends to provide constructive feedback. When you ask for feedback on an essay draft, ask if the essay's tone sounds like your voice—it should. If your parents, teachers, and friends do not believe your essay captures who you are or what you believe, surely we will be unable to recognize what is most distinctive about you. While securing feedback is suggested, you should not enlist hired assistance in the writing of your essays."

<http://admission.stanford.edu/application/transfer/essays.html>

Show! Don't tell.



A Moment in Life

We got to our house and saw the fire. It was scary, but in the end, everyone was safe.

A Moment in Life

My mother and I were coming home from buying new shoes. I had new sandals. She had new pumps. We were walking to our house from the bus. We were looking at everyone's tulips. She was saying she liked the red tulips and I was saying I liked the yellow ones.

Then we came to our block. Right outside our house stood two big fire engines. I could see lots of smoke. Tall orange flames came out of the roof. All the neighbors stood in a bunch across the street. Mama grabbed my hand and we ran. My uncle Sandy saw us and ran to us. Mama yelled, "Where's Mother?" I yelled, "Where's my grandma?"

A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. William

The Topic



Weak Essays: Hackneyed Topics

- Expedition
- Helping humanity
- ...

A Few Good Ideas

- Distinguishing accomplishments
- A seemingly banal subject with a twist
- Moving, personal narratives

Excerpts

(Note: The excerpts presented at the live seminar have not been included here. As an exercise, take a look at others' college essays, and use the chart below to analyze them.)

Strengths	Weaknesses



I wish you all the best in the application process!
