

How to Bullet-proof Your Essay

The essay is your best opportunity to impress the admission officers and let them know who you really are. Through the essay, you can show the colleges your passions, values or accomplishments that just aren't given justice in the fill-in-the-blanks of the application. While an uninspired essay won't necessarily doom your chances to getting accepted, an inspired one can propel you into the acceptance pile.

Here's how to produce a quality essay that the admission officers will remember:

Follow your passions. Choose the topic that is the most compelling to you. Don't write about what you think the colleges want you to write about. Be honest in your answers about what you really think. If you do this, the words will come more easily and your excitement will show through in your writing.

Begin your essay with fireworks. Don't begin with the obvious—your name, when you were born or what high school you go to. Instead, try dialogue, a description of a scene or a bold statement. Test some creative approaches to capturing the admission officers' attention right from the start.

Be specific. One mistake that many students make is that they are too general. Making a broad statement without supporting it with examples is not very effective. Instead, describe a specific moment, achievement or idea to make a more interesting essay.

Have a point. Before you start writing, think about what you are trying to convey in your essay. You should be able to summarize the point of your essay in a single sentence. If you can't, you may not have a point. It's important to have an underlying message that you're trying to relate through your essay.

Let the admission officers into your mind. Instead of just describing an event, let the admission officers experience the event with you. Share the thoughts that are running through your mind during the event. Explain what you are thinking and why you made the decisions that you did. This will give them real insight into who you are.

End with a bang. You want to sandwich your essay between a strong beginning and conclusion. The conclusion is the last taste that you will leave in the mouths of admission officers. Summarize your point and wrap your thoughts together with a conclusion that they'll remember.

Get help. While your essay of course must be your own work, you can improve your writing with input from other people. Ask for help and don't be afraid of a little constructive criticism. Use it to your advantage. Get feedback from at least one person about your writing.