



## Morning Writing: Finding Your Voice

From *Wow Online – College Essay*

Morning writing is the first activity we do in any new workshop, whether we are working with parents, students or teachers. It is also the first writing exercise in our online tutorial. Because it has nothing to do with college essays, this activity frees writers to listen to their writing voices without judgment or expectations. Later in the process, we use a similar exercise to help students capture details to include in their essays.

### **Materials**

Students will need paper and pens or computers.

**INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF VOICE:** *Explain why you are doing this.*

- Readers want to know more about you: Your audience is not your mother, father, teacher, tutor or guidance counselor. You are writing a story about yourself for someone who will probably never meet you. Be yourself. The essay offers an opportunity to share something meaningful and real.
- You have a unique voice: You are a teenager, and you should sound like one – a bright, articulate teenager, but a teen all the same. Write your story in your voice, in your own words.

**INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY:** *Provide an overview to set the tone.*

- We are going to write fast and messy.
- I will not collect what you write. You can keep it, throw it away ... whatever you want. Just follow my instructions.
- Don't write yet. Just think about this prompt: "What did you do this morning from the moment you woke up until you left your home?"

**ACTIVITY:** *Give participants very specific instructions.*

- On your computer or a sheet of paper, quickly record as much as you can recall, using all of your senses.
- Be specific, but don't worry about making sense or sounding clever. You can write fragments, sentences, lists or run-ons. It doesn't matter, because you are not writing an essay; you are simply capturing details.
- Write fast, and do not judge what you write. Don't even read it as you go along. Just keep moving forward.

**ALLOW 10 MINUTES, THEN CALL TIME**



**CONTINUE:** *Help participants identify elements of their writing voices.*

- Your writing voice is unique, and often shines through when you relax and write freely.
- Look back at what you wrote about your morning, and find three segments that truly sound like you.
- Each one can be anything from a short phrase to a multi-sentence description. They don't have to be exciting or clever; they just have to sound like YOU.
- For example:
  - Something you always say, do or think.
  - A description of something that screams "my house!" or "my room!" or "my mom!"
  - A phrase you like, a detailed description or something clear and specific that sounds just like you.
- When you find your segments, highlight, bold or underline them.
- These are examples of your writing voice.
- This is what you sound like when you are not trying too hard to be clever or creative. This is the voice you should write in when you begin to compose your application essay. Keep it in mind as you work on the essay.

**ALLOW 5 MINUTES, THEN CALL TIME**

**SHARE:** *Ask participants to share one example each. There are no right or wrong words, phrases or sentences. Praise students and point out unique aspects of their writing voices.*

**CONCLUDE:** *Re-emphasize the importance of honoring and sharing our unique voices.*