

College Essay Crash Course

Draft 1: Focus on Content Reviewer Guidelines

Give your reviewer three things:

1. This page
2. The prompt you are responding to (word count doesn't matter yet)
3. The draft of your essay

Instructions

Thank you for reviewing my essay. I have given you the prompt so you know what my essay responds to. I am interested in your feedback on content only at this point. I will have plenty of time to work on structure and polish later. With that in mind, please do not write on the draft as though you were editing it. Do not suggest changes, move paragraphs, rewrite sentences or correct spelling. I also do not need to concern myself with word count yet.

I have two goals at this point. Please help me make sure that:

1. I have answered the question/prompt.
2. I have shared something meaningful about myself that readers wouldn't know from reading the rest of my application.

Please review my essay without a pen in your hand or a keyboard nearby. Your feedback will be most useful to me if you simply read it, then answer these questions:

1. Why do you think I wrote about this subject?
2. Why do you think my essay does or does not do a good job of answering the prompt?
3. Where does my essay work well?
4. Where did you get confused or lost?
5. What else did you want to know?
6. I want my essay to have a clear theme. That theme should answer two questions: *What happened*, and *Why does it matter*? Please tell me what you think the answers are:
 - a. *What happened?* In other words, what is the topic/central focus of my essay?
 - b. *Why does it matter?* In other words, what do you learn about me (beyond the events/activities in the essay)?

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Draft 2: Focus on Content and Structure Reviewer Guidelines

Give your reviewer four things:

1. This page
2. The prompt you are responding to
3. The word count you are aiming for
4. The draft of your essay

Instructions

Thank you for reviewing my essay. I have given you the prompt so you know what my essay responds to. I am interested in your feedback on content and structure. I will polish the essay in the next revision. With that in mind, please do not write on the draft as though you were editing it. I am not looking for someone else to fix or improve my writing. I simply need outside input to ensure that I am on track. Admissions officers know I am a student; they do not expect me to sound like an adult. Every word should be my own.

I have three goals at this point. Please help me make sure that:

1. I have answered the question/prompt.
2. I have shared something meaningful about myself that readers wouldn't know from reading the rest of my application.
3. My essay moves fluidly from beginning to end, and everything in it serves a purpose.

After reading my essay, please answer the questions below.

1. Have I responded to the prompt? If not, what did I miss?
2. Is this essay about me, or is it about an event, person, experience, etc.? It is supposed to be a story about me. If not, how could I improve it?
3. Does my essay move smoothly from beginning to end? Please mark any bumpy sections on my draft.
4. Which parts of this essay really sound like me? Please mark them on my draft.
5. Have I been redundant? Have I left out key details? If so, what is missing? Please indicate where these details are missing on my draft.
6. What do I do well in this essay? Where could my essay be stronger? Please mark the strongest and weakest sections on my draft.

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Draft 3: Focus on Content, Structure and Polish Reviewer Guidelines

Give your reviewer four things:

1. This page
2. The prompt you are responding to
3. The word count you are aiming for
4. The draft of your essay

Instructions

Thank you for reviewing my essay. I have given you the prompt and word count so you know what my essay responds to and how long it should be. I am most interested in final edits and proofreading. I am not looking for confirmation that my idea is good or that I chose the right topic. Admissions officers know I am a student; they do not expect me to sound like an adult. Every word should be my own, so please do not rewrite any part of my essay.

I have three goals at this point. Please help me make sure that:

1. I have answered the question/prompt.
2. I have shared something meaningful about myself that readers wouldn't know from reading the rest of my application.
3. I have not made any grammatical, spelling or other technical errors.

After reading my essay, please answer the questions below.

1. Do I use the same verb tense throughout? Please mark one or two problem areas if I had trouble with this.
2. Have I avoided sentence fragments and run-on sentences? Please mark one or two problem areas if I had trouble with this.
3. Is my punctuation correct and consistent? Please mark one or two problem areas if I had trouble with this.
4. Is every word spelled correctly? Please mark one or two problem areas if I had trouble with this.
5. Do I use words accurately? Please mark one or two problem areas if I had trouble with this.
6. Do I use active voice and avoid passive voice? Please mark one or two problem areas if I had trouble with this.