



How to read any college essay like a pro

Start at the top and work through the questions. If you're reading rough ideas or a draft, the writing doesn't matter. Deal with language when the story and ideas are there.

When students write their essays with EssayQuest, these questions guide their work from day one.

1. Is it built on a strong foundation?

Know your audience

The audience for the college essay is a bored college admissions officer who just wants to get to know you. Imagine a friendly college tour guide who just graduated and got a job in the admissions office. That's how a lot of admissions officers get their start.

Imagine you're a tired admission officer. Do you think you've read this story a hundred times already? Does it follow a common storyline (for example, volunteering to rebuild a shelter, not making the team, coaching little kids in something you love).

Know your intention

An effective college essay is an engaging, authentic short story that shows who the student is.

Did the essay catch your attention and keep it to the end? Was it authentic? Was it a story (in the broadest sense of the word, as opposed to a school paper, news article, etc.)? Did you get a sense of who the student is?

Know your role

The best college essays are written like a teenager telling their story around the campfire to friends. An academic or sales perspective won't lead to the kind of essays admissions officers want to read.

What perspective did the writer take? A teen around the campfire, or something else

2. Does it have 3 types of content?

Stuff that happened

These are specific events, conversations, places, and so forth. This is what gives the reader a sense of "Oh, I'm in a place and time and can visualize what's going on."

In-the-moment experience

Can you tell what they were thinking or feeling at the time? What was going in their head, their heart, their body sensations, etc.?

Deep thoughts

Are there after-the-fact observations, insights, or perspectives? It's what the writer understands, thinks, or feels today looking back.

3. Is it well-written?

Everything is there for a reason

Essays can say more with less. Does every story, idea, sentence, and word serve a purpose?

It's easy to read

Does it make sense and have a flow that works? Is it smooth? Is anything confusing or ambiguous? Is it missing important information or making assumptions about what the reader knows?

It's proofread

Is it well-written? It doesn't have to follow formal rules of grammar (better if not, actually). But every sentence does need to be clear and understandable. And, no typos.



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