

ADMIT ONE

How to write a winning admission essay

By Beth Coakley

Your admissions packet finally arrives from the college of your choice. You start ploughing through all of the general questions – your name, address, phone number, birthday, mother’s maiden name, shoe size, etc. You persevere until you hit the last page and are faced with these chilling words: “Describe what a college education means to you.” That’s right; you’ve hit the admission essay.

Admission essays are the part where you become a real person in the admission board’s eyes. Before, you were just a collection of facts and data; now you are a living breathing individual who may or may not be right for their college.

Since this is your chance to shine, you want to set yourself apart from the thousands of other hopefuls who are going through the same process you are.

Be creative. One of the more famous admissions essays was in the movie *Legally Blonde*, where the main character, Elle, sent in a video instead of an essay to Harvard. She stood out to the board and was admitted almost immediately.

At the same time, don’t go over the top with your creativity. Remember, this is an essay, not a creative

story. Follow the basic essay structure and make sure you answer the question. And most importantly, don’t embellish the truth.

Don’t wait until the last minute to write. A hurriedly scribbled essay will not cut it. Research your subject, practice writing, and have a family member or friend critique your writing style. Preparation is important, because this is not only a chance for the board to see your personality; they also get a chance to critique your writing and critical thinking skills.

Typical Essay Questions

- What does a college education mean to you?
- Why did you apply to this college?
- Describe one person who has inspired you and why.
- What does success mean to you?
- Explain what meaning your faith has to you.
- Where do you see yourself after you graduate?
- Describe a time in your life when you felt fulfilled.

The Set-Up

Here’s where you can put what you’ve learned in language arts to good use! In preparing your essay, remember the proper essay structure:

- **Introduction:** Don’t just plunge into your essay. Start off with an attention-getter, like an anecdote, a shocking fact, or a question. The introduction is also the time to give your thesis, what your essay is all about.
- **Body:** This is the part where organization separates the exceptional students from the ordinary. Your ideas should flow one right into the other, and every paragraph should support your thesis statement.
- **Conclusion:** The conclusion will provide a short wrap-up of what you have said. A solid ending will show that you truly believe what you wrote.