

**10****Start Early**

Writing a good essay takes longer than you expect. Starting early gives you time to write and revise to create your best work. *"What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure"*

**9****Be Yourself**

A college essay isn't a term paper. Your essay must showcase the real person behind your test scores and GPA. Write in your own voice, and tell about your own experiences.

**8****Be Honest**

Sure, you can take a few liberties with the details but the purpose is to show the reader who you are, what's important to you, and how you think. Don't guess what the reader wants to hear.

**7****Take a Risk**

News flash...not every draft you write will be amazing! In the end, you'll stand out better if you stay away from the well-worn themes and choose a topic that is uniquely yours.

**6****Stay Focused**

*"The secret to being boring is to tell everything."* - Voltaire. Focus means staying on track with your theme and making sure you address the topic of the essay. If in doubt, go deeper, not broader.

**5****ReRead and ReWrite**

A successful college essay isn't a "one and done" activity. (Starting to see why #10 is important?) You'll want to write, revise, get feedback, and write some more. It pays off!

**4****Open with Interest**

The remaining 450 words won't help you if you lose your reader in the first paragraph. Start with an engaging introductory paragraph and capture your reader's attention. Don't repeat the essay topic!

**3****Know the Limit**

Simply put, the word limits are rules, not suggestions. Is it hard to write impactful essays within the limits? You bet! That's why it is important to make every word count, but count every word.

**2****Be Positive**

You want your audience to know you, and feel good about accepting you into their college community, so when in doubt, keep on the sunny side of life.

**1****Get Help**

Find someone you trust to give you honest feedback. It doesn't take an English PhD to help tune up your essay, but objective input and guidance can make all the difference, and often that isn't a job for Mom and Dad.

John Lanphere is the 'Chief Editing Officer' for SharperPencil™, an online essay coaching service focused on helping students develop their personal best application essays, personal statements, and scholarship essays.



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