

Writing Application Essays

Presented by the
University Writing Center

University Writing Center

Halle Library, Room 115

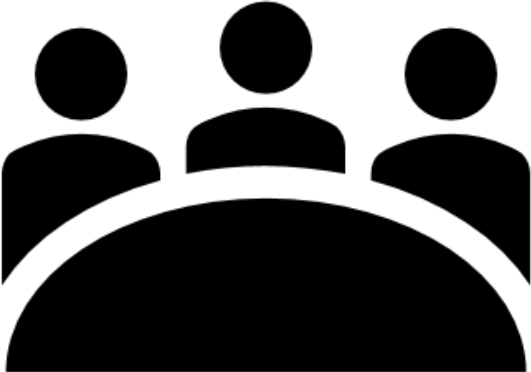
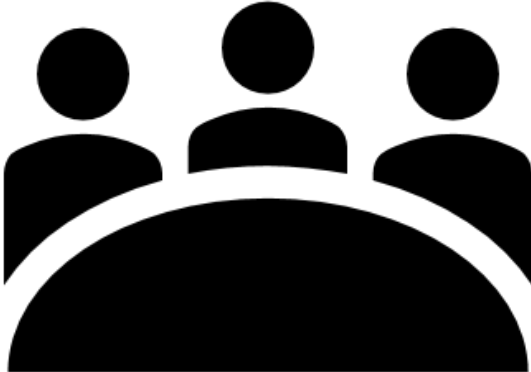
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Agenda



- 1. Engage** What are reviewers looking for in an application essay?
- 2. Learn** Strategies for writing focused and well-targeted essays for scholarship applications and other purposes
- 3. Practice** Planning and writing your application essay
- 4. Reflect** What did you learn? What will you use?



Engage

Imagine a committee is giving away a scholarship and only one student can get the money.

Applicants will write an essay to vie for this money.



Engage

Pros

- What do you think they would want to know about the applicant?
- What would make them choose one applicant over another?
- What could an applicant do in the essay to stand out (in a positive way)?

Cons

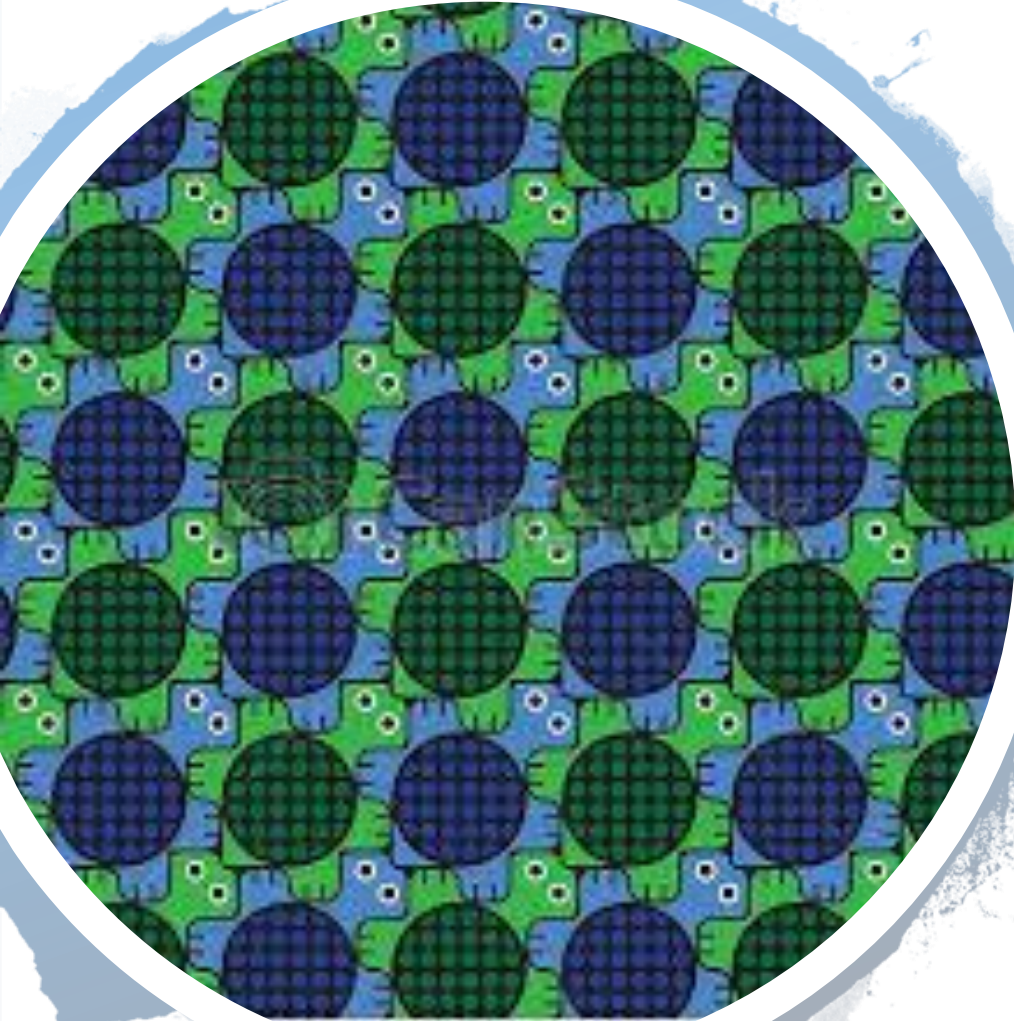
- What might make the committee reject an applicant?
- What would make them question the quality of the application?




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Examining Sample Application Essays



- What patterns and conventions do you notice in the writing?
- What elements can you identify that you like or that seem successful?
- What elements can you identify that might detract from the applicant's accomplishments?



pre-writing
strategies

Prewriting: Checking the Requirements and Researching the Organization

Each application may have specific requirements, so you should seek out information about these requirements:

- Check the website of the sponsoring organization or entity.
- Contact the organization or sponsor.
- Seek the guidance of someone like a faculty advisor.

Make sure you are knowledgeable about the school/grant/organization to which you are applying:

- Check the website and learn about key strengths of the program.



SHOW ME, DON'T TELL ME

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Tips for Drafting

- Highlight a few experiences in detail rather than list all your experiences.
- Be sure to show your experiences instead of tell about (or summarize) your experiences.
- Focus on getting your ideas on the page; you can revise later.
- “Write like a flood. Take things out later.” – Maxine Hong Kingston



Tips for Revising and Proofreading

- Pay special attention to describing your experiences and achievements in as few words as possible. Be aware of word count limitations.
- Make sure the verbs and nouns you use are impactful and distinctly describe your unique experiences.
- Take time away from your writing to get perspective.
- Seek input and feedback from respected peers, instructors, and others in the field.
- Visit the University Writing Center, www.emich.edu/uwc.

Checklist

When reviewing your personal statement ask yourself the following questions.

- Have I tailored my statement for this particular application?
- Are my sentences unique to me?
- Did I show my distinctive experiences through vivid word choice?
- Are my sentences grammatical/punctuated properly?
- Have I inspired the reader to invest in me through demonstrating passion, capability and vision?



Watch out for . . .

- Clichés (“It takes a village to raise a child.”)
- Stating what every other applicant states or feels (“I’ve always wanted to be a ...”)
- Extra words that don’t add value or contribute new information to distinguish you as a candidate
- Repetition of phrases
- Broad, generic statements (“I value diversity.”)
- Punctuation and grammar errors





Practice



Practice

If you have a prompt, use it to do some of your own prewriting or write from the sample prompt provided.

- List or circle the key words that help you identify the expectations your audience will have for your essay.
- Make a list of significant experiences you have had. (What have you done to prepare yourself for x? What are the distinctively unique experiences that you have had?)
- List what these experiences might help you do. (What will you do once you are there? How will x program/scholarship/experience contribute to your long-term career/life goals?)
- State your distinct outlook on the field of study. (Why do you want to do x? How will you approach x?)



Your essay should stand out (in a positive way). Be memorable, authentic, and well-qualified.

Prioritizing and Organizing

Put your experiences into priority order.
For example, your . . .

1. most significant achievement
2. excellence in the field
3. dedication to the field
4. personal characteristics (such as, loyalty, perseverance, etc.)
5. ability to show initiative, overcome adversity, etc.

- Carnegie Mellon University: Tips for Writing a Personal Statement
<http://www.cmu.edu/hpp/apply-to-schools/personal-statements/tips.html>
- UCLA Undergraduate Admissions
<http://www.admissions.ucla.edu/prospect/perstmt.htm>
- Essays That Worked, Johns Hopkins University
<https://apply.jhu.edu/application-process/essays-that-worked/>





Reflect

How did this workshop help you think about writing application essays in a new way?

Which specific strategies, tool, or concepts will you remember and apply to future writing?


Please complete the workshop evaluation form.

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*The University Writing Center
is a free resource
to help you with your writing.*

UWC Halle Hours

Monday - Tuesday 10-7

Wednesday - Thursday 10-6

Friday 11-4

Drop in or call 734.487.0694 for an appointment.

See <http://www.emich.edu/uwc/>