



COLLEGE ESSAY SELF-ASSESSMENT

FIRST DRAFT REVIEW

- Check for spelling errors with spellcheck AND by reading the draft carefully, also paying attention to correct spelling but wrong word, e.g., there vs. their, bear vs. bare, etc.
- Word count- no more than 650; best probably 500-650
- Check for grammar and syntax (e.g., run-on sentence) errors
- General flow and story arc- don't be too hard on yourself at this point; just make easy corrections or notes on this first draft





SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT DRAFT REVIEWS

- Check everything again from the first draft review section:
 - Spelling errors
 - Word count (400-650)
 - Grammar and syntax errors
 - Flow and story arc- in second and subsequent drafts ask yourself as you read: Is there a through line or theme that the paragraphs connect to and is it clear?
- Check for consistent verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and appropriate pronoun usage.
- Does the essay answer all parts of the question fully?
- Can the information in the essay be found w/n other parts of the application?
- Check for too much repetition in specific words, sentence structure, or sentence length.
- Does the essay sound like it was written by a high school student or straight out of a thesaurus?

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SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT DRAFT REVIEWS (CONT.)

- Do you have a hook to engage the reader and tap into their sense of curiosity?
- Is the essay concise, or are there words, sentences, or paragraphs which don't serve the single theme or story?
- Does the tone of the essay strike a good balance between formal and informal?
- Does your essay show versus tell? One way to tell is to check the number of adverbs, or "ly" words, in your essay, and try to eliminate most of them.
- Does your essay have a clear beginning, middle, and end (conclusion), even if not in that order?
- Do you have any literature or real world references in your essay? Not gratuitous or controversial, but if the reference supports your story and is meaningful to you, put it in.
- Does the essay truly represent who you are at this moment, and does it represent some better or best part of yourself that you would bring to a college campus?
- Is the essay congruent with the schools you are applying to?
- Review the conclusion. Does it show growth or a lesson learned without being cliché or simply tied up too neatly?
- Do you come across as likable in the essay, or does the essay come across as condescending or lecturing, or even negative?
- Does each paragraph move the story along the theme, even if in an unexpected way?
- What do you want a college admissions officer to know about you that isn't included in other aspects of your application, and after reading your essay, do you think that message is conveyed by the story?
