

College Essay Revision Guide

A good college-application narrative essay response does the following things well.

A college application essay personifies you in relation to an audience of college admission officers who know nothing about you other than your name and application number.

- 1) Your personification (and I choose this term carefully because everything is a metaphor) needs to illustrate in concise, but vibrant detail, what it is that you represent. Does the essay touch on the following questions either explicitly or implicitly?
 - a. Are you empathetic? How? Why?
 - b. What are your values?
 - c. Who do you want to “be,” not what you want to “do” in your future?
- 2) How is the essay affecting things such as theme, tone, purpose through the artful and deliberate use of literary and rhetorical devices?
- 3) Is the tone appropriate? Does the writer affect tone where important to produce a cathartic moment in the minds of your audience, but in a way that remains both scholarly and professional?
- 4) Is the essay’s audience awareness strong or weak? What does the writer need to share in order for the audience to really get a sense of who the writer is? Remember that the audience is NOT ME! Your audience is college admission officers only.
- 5) Poor verb choices – lame verbs do not cut it. It directly reflects lazy thinking. Adverbs and adjectives should be very limited and used only when necessarily. My challenge to you is not to use these devices. They allow the writer to tell things, they hinder all ability to show. Narratives of all types need to show where possible and appropriate, not tell. Note these considerations on the draft itself.