

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ESSAY

It's not just what you say; it's *how* you say it.

THINK about the characteristics that make good essays—college admissions and scholarship essays in particular. List as many as you can on the brainstorming handout.

- **READ** both exemplar college admissions essays. Highlight and annotate characteristics that make them good essays. You may also highlight and annotate opportunities you see to make the essays better.
- Add the characteristics you highlight to your brainstorm list if they're not already there.

EXAMPLES:

- Focus on the prompt
- Economy
- Humor

SHARE your list with a partner. If your partner thought of something you didn't, add it to your list.

FORM A GROUP of four with another set of partners. Again, share your lists and continue building your list by adding any new ideas you hear.

BRAINSTORM RELAY

Your group of four is now your team. Teams will take turn sharing ideas from their list. Once an idea is shared, it cannot be repeated! The team that shares the most ideas wins.

When the Brainstorm Relay is completed, add any new ideas you see to your brainstorm list.

EXEMPLAR ESSAY 1

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE STATE UNIVERSITY AND THIS PARTICULAR PROGRAM?

What makes this essay particularly effective is not just its *cohesive structure* but also the *level of details* the author uses in the response. By directly identifying the specific aspects of the university that are attractive to the writer, the writer is able to clearly and effectively show not only his commitment to his studies but, perhaps more importantly, the level of thought he put into his decision to apply. Review committees know what generic responses look like so *specificity* sells.

EXEMPLAR ESSAY 2

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

In addition to its *structure* and use of *clear, demonstrative language*, there is one thing that makes this an effective essay: *focus*. Notice that although the question is broad, the answer is narrow. This is crucial. It can be easy to wax poetic on a topic and, in the process, take on too much. Instead, by highlighting *one specific aspect* of his personality, the author is able to give the reader a taste of who he is without overwhelming him or simply reproducing his résumé. This emphasis gives the reader the opportunity to learn who the writer is on his terms and makes it a truly compelling application essay.

* Language that displays feelings openly and is expressive or affectionate can be described as *demonstrative*.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING COMMON COLLEGE ADMISSION/SCHOLARSHIP PROMPTS:

- Describe an influential person in your life.
- Discuss an activity outside of the classroom.
- Discuss an issue that is important to you.

- Next, review the "Essay Outline."
- Then begin creating an outline for the essay prompt that you chose.
- Use your brainstorm list to help guide your outline. If you need help getting started, come to the front and get the essay template that matches the prompt you chose.