



## **College Application Essay Template**

### **Before You Begin**

#### **Key Principles:**

- Be authentic and genuine—write in your own voice
  - Show, don't just tell—use specific examples and details
  - Focus on growth, insight, or self-discovery
  - Aim for 550-650 words (check specific requirements)
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### **Essay Structure**

#### **Opening: (Hook and Context)**

*Goal: Capture attention and introduce your topic.*

#### **Try starting with one of these approaches:**

- A vivid moment or scene
  - An unexpected statement or realization
  - A meaningful object or place
  - A question you've grappled with
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#### **Body (Story and Development)**

*Goal: Develop your narrative with specific details and examples.*

## **Section 1: Situation/Challenge**

What happened? What were you facing?

Describe the specific experience, challenge, interest, or realization. Include concrete details—what did you see, feel, think?

## **Section 2: Your Response/Process**

What did you do? How did you handle the situation?

Show your actions, choices, or thought process. This reveals your character and values.

## **Section 3: Complications or Turning Point**

What changed? What did you learn?

Describe a shift in understanding, an obstacle you overcame, or a deeper layer you discovered.

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## **Reflection (Insight and Growth)**

*Goal: Show self-awareness and what this means for your future.*

### **Think about these questions:**

- What did this experience teach you about yourself?
  - How have you changed or grown?
  - What do you now understand that you didn't before?
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## **Conclusion (Looking Forward)**

*Goal: Connect to who you are now and hint at your future.*

### **Possible approaches:**

- Circle back to your opening image or idea with new meaning
  - Connect your story to how you'll engage in college
  - End with a forward-looking statement about your values or goals
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## Self-Editing Checklist

After drafting, ask yourself:

### Authenticity:

- Does this sound like me, or like what I think colleges want?
- Would someone who knows me recognize my voice?

### Specificity:

- Have I included concrete details and examples?

### Insight:

- Do I show growth or self-awareness?

### Structure:

- Does my opening grab attention?
- Do my paragraphs flow?
- Does my conclusion feel genuine?

### Polish:

- Have I removed clichés and generic statements?
  - Is it within the word limit?
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## Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Writing what you think admissions wants instead of your truth
  - Summarizing your résumé or listing accomplishments
  - Using overly formal or academic language
  - Choosing a topic that's too broad or generic
  - Focusing only on the problem without showing growth
  - Ending with "and that's why I want to go to your school"
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## **Final Tips**

1. **Start early** - give yourself time for multiple drafts
2. **Read it aloud** - if it doesn't sound like you talking, revise
3. **Get feedback** - but don't let others rewrite your voice
4. **Be specific** - replace general statements with concrete details
5. **Trust yourself** - your story matters exactly as it is

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