

PROGENY

WRITE TO INFLUENCE! -- THE COLLEGE APPLICATION (PART 1)

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This article speaks to teenagers (and their parents) facing that daunting challenge – the college application. Consider it from a different perspective. The essay is an invitation to shine, to reveal something grades can't—your personality! Embrace this opportunity to give admission officers a sense of who you are.

This submission is for many of you the initial exposure to "adult writing," which is constrained by time and space. The reader's time is measured in seconds; it is fleeting, as are opportunities you seek. Space is also limited. You

must make each word count and every second of the reader's time play to your advantage.

This two-part article is based on my workshop, "Write to Influence! College Application – Essays That Open Doors." Provided below are five strategies to craft that attention-getting essay. Part 2 will provide specific "Word Sculpting" tools to compose succinct, focused, and hard-hitting text. Powerful writing must leverage both strategies and the tools.

Inventory yourself. Identify what constitutes ... you. This is an introspective exercise. List likes and dislikes; strengths and weaknesses; hopes and dreams; fears; fabulous experiences and horrid ones; identify what you learned from these experiences.

Reflect –don't just report. When recalling an event, don't merely relay a factual sequence of events. What did you learn from the experience and how did it change you? Develop your ideas by including specific details, examples, and reasons. Eliza Doolittle exclaimed in "My Fair Lady," "Don't talk of stars burning above, if you're in love. SHOW ME!"

Don't tackle world problems. Smarter folks than you try to solve world problems and, their solutions are not limited to a single page! Avoid grandiose ideas such as, "There is so much suffering in the world that I feel I have to help people." and "At the foundation of my character is a deep desire to create peace. I would like to apply these personality traits to make me the most useful I can be as I find my place in the world." Finally, if your opening sentence begins with, "Throughout the history of time," you're on the wrong track.

Compose a roadmap. You, as the storyteller, are taking the reader on a journey. You know the general gist ... the beginning, the middle, and the end. Devel-

Passions? Hobbies? Add those, too. Please note, this information will pay dividends as you later prepare for job interviews.

Share something personal. Adjudicators' want to know, "Who is this person seeking to join our student body?" Tell them! Convey a personal story such as an experience, a person, a movie, a current event or topic that moves you. Were you disturbed, hurt, thrilled, or excited by something? The stranger or more pronounced the event, the more engaging your essay will be. What sets you apart? You have a unique background, interests, and personality. Select a topic that speaks to you and address it from an unusual perspective. Be honest, genuine, and thoughtful.

op an outline – a roadmap – to help identify key points as the concept evolves. This strategy is especially necessary to structure thoughts in space-constrained, competitive writing.

Compose your essay like a gourmet meal. Fine dining consists of a delectable appetizer, fabulous entre, and memorable dessert. Compose your essay similarly. Begin with a powerful, opening sentence – the appetizer – that grabs readers' attention and makes them want to read more. Follow with a well-crafted body of text – the entre. Conclude with an equally powerful sentence – the dessert. Take care with this piece; it constitutes the final impression – taste – that your essay imparts to the evaluators.

Carla has taught powerful writing to thousands of people for the past 15 years. Her workshops are tailored to a variety of audiences: high school students thru professionals in the workforce. "Write to Influence!" is available as paperback and e-book at Amazon and other retailers. Additional information about Carla, her book, and workshops is at www.carlabass.com