Here are some things that work...

- Know the degree you want to pursue.
- Mention the classes involved in that degree plan.
- Connect your academic and extracurricular interests with the university you are applying.
- Talk about something you did that motivated you.
- Use an anecdote—these stories can show a lot about your personal characteristics.
- Consider why you chose that university. For instance, if the school is known for a strong engineering program and you want to focus on engineering, then showcase that.

References


Things to **DO**

**Use good writing mechanics**
Check your grammar and spelling. College ready writing is expected.

**Follow the instructions**
You do not want to come across as someone who either cannot or will not follow the directions. This makes you appear as unable to receive new information from professors.

**Know your audience**
The admissions officer has read thousands of essays. You want to make yourself memorable. Do not be boring; be original.

**Stay on topic**
You are the topic—your background, your future and what makes you awesome.

**Tell what your application can’t**
This is your opportunity to tell about yourself outside of the questions on your application. Be interesting.

**Read other successful essays**
The best way to know what works is to read it for yourself.

**Open with an anecdote**
Engage them from the beginning. Avoid catch phrases and clichés.

**Consider what you would want to see in an essay**
Schools want to know that you are going to graduate, that you will work hard, engage and succeed. Show that you can think critically, solve problems, enjoy learning, have passion for something and finish what you start.

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Happy Writing

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Things to **Avoid** on your college essay

**Trying too hard**
Avoid sounding like a Shakespearean sonnet or using SAT vocab words. This makes you sound unrelatable. Essentially, your college essay is a marketing document.

**Be mindful of your topic**
Do not write about topics that make you seem boring, immature or that you lack good judgement. Likewise, avoid topics that make you seem disconnected or self-absorbed.

**Being too personal**
Try not to sell yourself as someone who has no boundaries. Do not discuss losing your virginity, overly detailed stories of illness or bodily functions, your love for a significant other or confessing to weird desires.

**Revealing bad judgement**
Avoid talking about past illegal or immoral actions, unless your narrative illustrates how you turned over a new leaf. Be careful, however; if your actions are from the not so distant past, your judgement could still be called in to question.

**Showing off**
Avoid bragging. Have a sense of your accomplishments. Volunteering to tutor a few hours a week, but playing it up to be a massive accomplishment, shows you have no sense of the scope of what you do.

**Writing about topics that aren’t a unique experience**
Everyone experiences the death of a loved one. Every athlete has a sports story about a championship. Most service trips to 3rd world countries are the same. Unless, there is some off the wall twist, avoid these topics.

**Clichés**
Do not say “I’m a passionate person.” Tell a story that illustrates that quality through your actions and deeds.