



Essay佳作叩开哈佛大门 精彩点评道破申请迷津

50 SUCCESSFUL HARVARD APPLICATION ESSAYS: WHAT WORKED FOR THEM CAN HELP YOU GET INTO THE COLLEGE OF YOUR CHOICE

第2版

The Harvard Crimson □ 编著



哈佛成功申请文

50篇

{ 英汉对照点评 }

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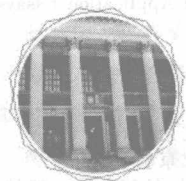


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Acknowledgments

The *Harvard Crimson*, the daily student newspaper of Harvard University, is back with our latest attempt to help you attack the college admissions essay and come out a winner. We have taken the strongest essays of our first edition of *50 Successful Harvard Application Essays* and combined them with several new pieces to help you face the challenge of writing a well-written, introspective, and engaging college admissions essay.

As with the first edition, we sought to collect a variety of essays that represent a wide range of writing styles, themes, and viewpoints. From the culinary delights that emerge from blending cultures to the art of mastering magic tricks, we have tried to cover the gamut of interests and writing techniques of Harvard students. These essays were selected based on style, creativity, and choice of subject. Following each essay, there is an analysis by one of the *Crimson's* editors that offers a perspective on what the essay aims to do, how it goes about achieving this goal, its strengths, and its weaknesses. With this analysis, our aim was, again, diversity. In all, over fifteen *Crimson* staff members—from all areas of the paper from business to news reporting—contributed reviews.

None of the contributors to this book—neither the authors of the essays nor the authors of the analyses—is an expert. They are a collection of people who have been through the process themselves and want to help you in crafting a great essay. In other words, you will find many voices, some of which contradict one another. Listen to the ones that most resonate with you.

There is no formula to this book, just as there is no formula to writing your college essay—of course, we offer you some tips to get you on the right path. Our hope is that somewhere within these pages you will find inspiration for your work. Ultimately, though, your essay must be your own, just as these essays are the personal efforts of their authors.

viii • Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone who helped revise this *Crimson* classic: Rebecca O'Brien and Lauren Schuker, my project coordinators; our agent, Linda Mead, for her help in shaping this vision; Tom Mercer, our editor at St. Martin's Press; Matthew Granade, the author of the original edition; and last but not least, all of the authors who submitted their essays and the *Crimson* editors who helped analyze them.

Good luck!

—Erica K. Jalli

President, 131st guard of *The Harvard Crimson*

Fifteen Steps to Success—That May or May Not Prove to Be Surefire

So you want to write a college admissions essay.

By now you have undoubtedly received a wide range of advice from a wide range of sources: guidance counselors urging you to start early, parents worried about your vocabulary level, English teachers stressing the importance of proper grammar.

At this point you have also probably come to the realization that there is no one foolproof method for writing a winning admissions essay. In fact, much of the advice you have probably been given—and which you will read in this book—will probably contradict itself. Example: “Take a risk. Write about something that will make your essay stand out,” versus “Don’t take any chances. The admissions committee is looking for a well-written, well-argued essay. You can do that without coloring outside the lines.” Another example: “The personal statement is only one part of your application. Don’t stress,” versus “Revise. Revise. Revise. Proofread. Proofread. Proofread. Draft multiple versions. This is the most important piece of writing you will ever produce.”

As you can already see, the whole process can be very confusing. Don’t let this discourage you. The most truthful advice that can be offered is that there is no one way to write a successful admissions essay. The essay—in terms of both its content and the manner in which it is written—is like you: unique. You can write about your family trip to Niagara Falls. You can talk about what a perfect student, brother, friend, or all-around good guy you are, or you can write about the day you threw a temper tantrum after losing the state tennis finals. The beauty of the personal statement is that it is completely personal.

Still, we have pledged to help you, and help you we will, by way of the following steps to writing a good, solid, impressive admissions es-

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say. Many of these tips resemble advice your high school English teacher would offer. Others are advice that you may have heard from sisters, brothers, and friends. Some of it might even sound like nagging. It's still worth it for us to repeat them and for you to listen to them.

Here goes:

1. *Think strategically.* Your essay is an opportunity to show a part of yourself that neither your test scores nor your grades can convey. There are many ways to go about doing this. You can emphasize your creative talent, or you can play up an extracurricular activity or hobby that is particularly important to you. You can discuss a formative moment or an aspect of your life that you feel has shaped you. If you devote the essay to rehashing what is already apparent in the rest of the application, you lose a valuable space for self-expression.
2. *Be reflective.* Speak from the heart. Explain what the experience means to you, rather than simply recounting the experience as it happened. This is what gives your application a human component and differentiates you from everyone else. It's important to show how you have changed and developed into the person you are today.
3. *Start early.* Give yourself enough time to brainstorm and then let drafts sit so you have more time to proofread. The more time you have, the more you can make the essay truly reflect who you are.
4. *Brainstorm ideas* with friends, family members, and teachers. While the personal statement is one of the most intimate parts of the application, it certainly can benefit from constructive criticism. Don't rule out any essay topic because it's not impressive enough, exciting enough, or unique enough. You may not realize just how important it was for you to hit the game's

winning shot, or how much your support helped a family member get through a life-threatening illness. Those who know you best can give you very effective feedback.

5. *Avoid clichés* in your writing and be original in your ideas. This rule applies for images within your writing as well as for the topic of the essay itself. Be aware that some ideas—winning the state football/soccer/gymnastics championship—have been done at least a thousand times before you. There’s nothing inherently wrong with addressing the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, but try to be more original. Be memorable.
6. *Steer away from gimmicks.* People have pulled them off, but to do it, you have to do it well. If you’re a great cartoonist, send in those comic strips. Or if you are a wonderful poet, go for it. Don’t attempt to invent something just to make your essay stand out. Be subtle and tactful, using an authentic voice and wit. Remember, execution is everything and mediocrity doesn’t win.
7. *If you don’t know what a word means, don’t use it.* Remember the “K.I.S.S.” rule: keep it simple, stupid. Make two or three points and finish up. Don’t overwhelm your reader with extraneous details. Even if you do know what a long word means, a short word might just as well express what you’re trying to say. The SATs are your chance to flex those verbal muscles, and there is nothing worse than misusing a word in an essay.
8. *Stay “on message.”* Admissions officers will read your essay in less than a few minutes, so keep the scale of the story manageable. Use relevant and specific anecdotes to prove your point. Every word should say something new. Read through the essay several times and trim repetitive or nonfunctional sentences. Don’t expect to express all the nuances and complexities of what the death of a loved one meant in less than five hundred words. Keep the scope of your essay appropriate to the length.

9. *Start strong.* As any good essayist will tell you, it's the beginning that counts most. Remember that your reader is trying to glean a sense of who you are, so try and grab the reader's attention from the beginning. Make it easy for them, make them want to read on, and you will be rewarded.
10. *Conclusions are important.* Many times, a beautifully written essay is weakened with a moral at the end of the story. Don't ruin a perfectly good essay by launching into broad, sweeping generalizations. If you find yourself thinking that a platitude is necessary to prove your point, start revising. Returning to your opening line in your ending sentence is a good way to tie it all together. Just as the introduction will set the tone for the essay, the conclusion must resonate with the reader.
11. *Don't take yourself too seriously.* Don't be afraid to be yourself. Use humor if you are a funny person. As long as it's tasteful, it can't hurt you to make your reader smile.
12. *Relax.*
13. *Proofread.*
14. *Proofread.*
15. *Proofread.*

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MEMORABLE MOMENTS

“The Handyman’s Special”

By Timothy Josiah Morris Pertz, who attended a medium-sized private school in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

I made my first trip to Costa Rica when I was fifteen. I spent a summer living with a Costa Rican family in the capital city of San José and studying at a language school. I was eager to absorb as much of the culture as I possibly could, and so for dinner on my first night in the country I stuffed myself with the most popular traditional dish, *gallo pinto*, or rice and beans.

The next morning I woke up early and walked a few blocks to the Costa Rican Language and Dance Academy. I was placed in a class, and for the rest of the morning I studied Spanish verbs and phrases. We broke for lunch at noon, and as the school emptied out I stayed behind in class to finish up a grammar exercise. I hadn’t eaten breakfast and was hungry for some more *gallo pinto*, but just as I was walking out the door to go to lunch I felt nature call.

I remembered seeing the women’s bathroom as I came in, but I didn’t see one for the men. I wandered the halls. I saw no men’s bathroom. I became desperate. Still no men’s bathroom. I looked left, then right, swallowed my pride and slipped into the ladies’ room.

It was only meant for one person, but wasn’t at all small. It had several beautiful antique fixtures, such as a claw-foot porcelain bathtub (with a pile of rusty hangers in it) and an old toilet with a gold-plated handle.

I sat down and did what I had forgotten one generally does after eating lots of beans. I finished up (remembering to throw the toilet paper in the wastebasket, as is done in Costa Rica to keep the pipes from clogging) and pulled the gold-plated handle. Nothing happened. Huh, that’s funny. Tried again. Nothing. Sh*t.

For years my father worked as a maintenance man at a summer camp, and had a great deal of experience with plumbing. I, however, had been

sheltered from the world of waste removal and had been too concerned with the high pursuit of academia to learn my father's art. It took being stuck in the ladies' bathroom of a strange school in a foreign country with a full, broken toilet to make me realize the error of my ways.

There was no one around; I could have just slipped back out and no one would have known I was the culprit. But I knew I would dishonor my father if I walked away (it wouldn't reflect too well on me as a person either), so I decided I would try my best to deal with the situation.

For the first time in my life, I opened up the cover at the back of the toilet. I studied the mechanism for a minute and realized that there needed to be something that would connect the handle to the plug that drains the water. I looked around the room, grabbed a hanger from the bathtub, twisted it into a straight piece of wire, attached one end to the stopper and one to the handle, and flushed. I heard the swishing sound of success as the contents of the toilet disappeared into never-never land.

That day I learned what my father already knew, that life calls for an understanding not only of lofty topics, but of more practical matters as well. Most importantly, I learned not to run away from sticky situations, but to deal with them with grace, persistence, and a sense of humor. This was the first in a series of realizations about the importance of public service at the most down-and-dirty levels, the beginning of a personal transformation that would lead to my returning to Costa Rica the next summer to revive a recycling program in the Monteverde Cloud Forest.

But that was a ways in the future. For the moment, I needed to eat and get back to class. With newfound confidence and sense of purpose, I ran to the restaurant across the street and gobbled down a big plate of beans.

ANALYSIS

Pertz chooses a particularly sticky subject that quite easily could have left him knee-deep in, well, his own shit. But despite the sensitive topic and the