

# **UPCHIEVE: ESSAY EDITING (AND RESUMES)**

**COLLEGE COUNSELING TRAINING**

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# ESSAYS

PERSONAL STATEMENT, SHORE RESPONSE, SUPPLEMENTAL  
ESSAY, DISCIPLINARY HISTORY, OPTIONAL INFO

# ESSAY EDITING 101

## Things to keep in mind:

- Not all schools will ask for an essay.
- Make sure the student is answering the question(s) that the prompt is asking.
- Show, not tell. Use active verbs.
- Be on the look out for flow, spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.
- Ensure the student's voice is maintained throughout the essay.
- The first draft should never be submitted.
- Ask students to try reading the essay out loud.



# PERSONAL STATEMENT/PERSONAL ESSAY

- For Common App, students will be asked to choose to respond to 1 out of 5 prompts.
- Prompts will generally be broad in nature and ask for students to share experiences relating to their: background, identity, interest, talents, accomplishments, transition into adulthood, a lesson learned from failure, a problem solved, or an idea challenged.
- Word Limit for Common App: 650 Words
  - Students should aim to reach 80% of the word limit or use full range.
  - Do not go over the word limit.

## Things to Keep in Mind:

- Think Small
- Focus on the details (show, don't tell):
- Branding: After reading the student's personal statement, the reader should be able to summarize the applicant in a few sentences

# SHORT RESPONSE

- Topics vary depending on the school.
  - Topics might be very specific.
  - Require students to get straight to the point in their responses.
  - Limited word count.
  - Students should focus their answer on a single event that exemplifies their primary point.
  - Tip: Encourage students to use active voice to avoid getting wordy. It will help with the word count.
- Example: 500 Words. Why do you want to attend this college/university?
    - Student might talk about certain courses, programs (ex: study abroad), family attended the school, etc.
  - Example: 500 Words. How will you contribute to this campus?
    - This requires a little bit of research from the student.
  - Although it's a short response, students might struggle with going over the word count or not answering the question.

# SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY

- Topics will vary by the school.
- It can be hard to prepare for this essay ahead of time.
- Encourage students to create a “bank” of people or events that have been influential throughout their life in order to speed up this process.
- All previous writing tips are applicable here.
- Some supplemental essays may ask applicants to explain why they are applying to this specific school.
- Therefore, students should do thorough research regarding the features and key characteristics of the school.
- Students need to demonstrate both how they will utilize the school’s unique resources to succeed as well as how the school will benefit from offering the students admission (over other applicants).

# DISCIPLINARY HISTORY

- It is important for students to be sincere and take responsibility for their actions.
- Some infractions will be deemed more serious than others.
- Academic dishonesty, violence, theft, or any repeating pattern of bad behavior could be a deal breaker for some schools.
- However, many schools understand that students sometimes make poor choices. If a student can show they have learned from their mistakes and discontinued previous behaviors, this infraction might not make a difference.
- Students should be honest, take responsibility, and don't overshare. Use guidance counselor for help.
- Encourage students to discuss with their guidance counselor to discuss what the high school reports to colleges.
- Counselor report.
- It is beneficial to develop a relationship with the school counselors as they can provide comments on how the student has grown and learned from the incident in order to ease admissions officers' concerns when reading about the student's disciplinary history.
- Also applies to other recommenders for LoR. The recommender(s) can vouch for the student's growth and maturity since the incident.
- The trust from the high guidance counselor and other teachers needs to be earned. It shouldn't be an expectation.



# OPTIONAL/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Some students leave this blank.
- Can help address confusion or concerns for admissions officers.
- This can be an opportunity to discuss the following matters:
  - Gap in timeline/educational history
  - Failed course
  - Extenuating circumstances that impacted student's ability to perform well or participate in extracurricular activities (ex: family demands)
- DO NOT use this section to discuss additional interests, personal characteristics, or achievements.
- These areas are highlighted in other parts of the applicants.



# RESUMES

CONSISTENCY AND DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS.

# RESUME 101

- Resume gives an overview of student's experiences to-date while highlighting their strengths.
- Students should focus on activities that they feel define them rather than finding something for every category.
- Resumes should stay within one page.
- Students will need to pick and choose which activities are most relevant for each school & program they are applying to.
- We recommend that students create a “master version” of their resume which features every single experience and can be as long as the student wants.
- From there, the student can create one-page resumes tailored to the different schools.
- Formatting matters. There is no one set way to design a resume but resumes should follow a consistent format.
- If students are struggling to fill lines on their resume, ask them questions about their specific responsibilities.

# TIPS FOR DRAFTING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

## Tips for drafting an effective resume:

- Remember to include full name & contact information
- Use bullet points and be precise
- Use active verbs to describe roles and responsibilities, focus on personal contribution and impact
- Emphasize leadership positions
- Include quantitative data whenever possible (“managed a team of volunteers” vs. “managed 37 volunteers”)
- Use past tense and present tense correctly and consistently for past and current activities
- Complete sentences are not necessary, avoid using articles (the, a, an), helping verbs (have, had, may, might), being verbs (am, is, are, was, were), or non-universal abbreviations (For examples: “supervise admissions consultants team”, “assess new academic software”)
- Clearly and consistently indicate the positions held and duration of involvement for each activity
- Read out loud for any errors.
- Have someone proofread the resume.

# RESUME (CONTINUED)

## Categories:

1. Education
2. Internship & Work Experience
3. Extracurricular Activities: Sports, Volunteering.
4. Awards & Honors.

*Note: Perfect attendance and honor roll recognitions are trivial and should not be included.*

5. Professional Skills, Hobbies, and Talents

*Examples: coding ability & knowledge of programming languages, Microsoft Office, graphic & web design, photography, videography, foreign languages, ability to play instruments, martial arts, etc.*

**CONTINUE TO  
ENCOURAGE OUR  
STUDENTS!**



**CONGRATULATE THEM ON THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!  
GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL IS A BIG DEAL.**