**Consider your application as a whole. What do you personally want to emphasize about your application for the admission committee’s consideration? Highlight something that’s important to you or something you haven’t had a chance to share. Tell us, don’t show us (no websites please).** **(300 word maximum)\***

Growing up, I loved solving math riddles. I appreciated the fact that arithmetics had non-abstract, defined solutions. So when my friend invited me to a competitive programming club called Kokocoder, I was instantly interested. I believe it would allow me to pursue my passion for problem-solving from a computer science perspective. As I spent hours in the club learning, laughing, and enduring difficulties, the once-alien environment slowly turned into a place of comfort.

Through my journey at Kokocoder, I’ve encountered many people and been taught many lessons. However, I believe one of the biggest lessons I learned came from Vale, a senior member of the club. As a mentor to me, he was daring, innovative, and intelligent. Whenever I felt puzzled by one of the coding problems, he’d always tell me, “Start with the most ridiculous solution and see if it works. You can always optimize it later.” His outlook on solving problems encouraged me to become more creative and open-minded with different approaches. And as I continued progressing with this mindset, I realized that there was no wrong way of pursuing knowledge, no matter how random it may sound. This created a rippling effect on my growth in programming and school.

My time at the club has made me more appreciative of the opportunities I had and grateful for the people around me as I expanded my social circle from late-night practice sessions to partaking in memorable events like camps and field trips. Being able to learn alongside other enthusiastic students has provided me with a competitive yet collaborative environment, enhancing my interpersonal skills.

The mindset I gained in Kokocoder will allow me to inch closer to my goal as a programmer as I continue to pursue knowledge at Carnegie Mellon and beyond.

Hi Joe,

Thank you for your essay. Your main point is that Kokocoder showed you the different ways of problem solving, but I don’t see much of that in your essay. You can cut down the part where you learned this lesson into one short paragraph and spend the rest of the essay discussing how your perception and lifestyle changed after this revelation. How did you grow? How did you improve in programming and in school? What did expanding your social circle lead to? You are a different person because of this lesson, and that is what the admissions officer wants to hear about.

C.G.