

GENERAL TIPS FOR APPLICATION ESSAY WRITING

1 WRITING PROCESS TIPS



TIME MANAGEMENT

IN ORDER TO PRODUCE QUALITY WORK, ENOUGH TIME NEEDS TO BE ALLOCATED TO THE WRITING PROCESS.

1. Start early to ensure sufficient time to fine tune your writing.
2. Create a timeline for your essay that includes self-made due dates (i.e. first draft needs to be completed by a certain date). These internal deadlines will alleviate stress and ensure enough time is provided to the writing process.
3. Allocate extra time in case something goes wrong. Sometimes unexpected things can happen so working ahead of a deadline can help to ensure you do not have to rush at the end.



WRITE MANY DRAFTS

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT AND OFTENTIMES THE FIRST, SECOND AND EVEN THIRD DRAFTS STILL REQUIRE SOME LEVEL OF IMPROVEMENT.

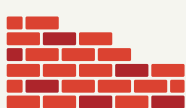
1. During earlier drafts focus on major revisions, look to change anything that does not flow or work in terms of the content of the essay.
2. During later drafts focus on editing, use the abbreviation **COPS** which stands for **c**apitalization, **o**rganization, **p**unctuation, and **s**pelling. Although this seems quite elementary, it can make a major difference on the overall quality and fluidity of the essay.



GET OTHERS TO READ IT

SOMETIMES WHEN YOU ARE WRITING SOMETHING YOU TEND TO OVERLOOK CERTAIN ERRORS DUE TO YOUR INDIVIDUAL STYLE OF WRITING.

1. By giving your essay to a peer and having them read it, they should be able to point out errors or inconsistencies that you perhaps missed.
2. Also, consider taking a break from writing and coming back with a fresh set of eyes.
3. When self-editing, consider reading from an outsider's perspective, perhaps you will discover a personal anecdote that you did not explain well enough or an inconsistency in your story.
4. Check out the **writing clinics available at Western**. They provide free one-on-one appointments with writing advisors where they can help you with things like vocabulary, grammar, and flow. You can investigate these resources at <http://writing.uwo.ca/>!



OVERCOMING WRITER'S BLOCK

IT IS COMMON FOR WRITERS TO FIND STARTING THE ESSAY TO BE THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THE WRITING PROCESS.

1. When facing writer's block, sometimes the best thing to do is to write down all of your thoughts and worry about the eloquence of your writing later.
2. It can help to start from somewhere other than the beginning (i.e. a body paragraph), this can get you into the writing flow and you can frame your introduction around this.

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ESSAY CONTENT TIPS



BE AUTHENTIC

GETTING CARRIED AWAY WITH USING COMPLEX WORDS AND FOCUSING ON YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS CAN COME OFF AS INSINCERE IN CERTAIN ESSAY CONTEXTS.

1. Showcase other aspects of yourself that are not necessarily demonstrated on your CV. This is your opportunity to talk about things the reader otherwise would not know about you.
2. Don't solely focus on presenting yourself in the most appealing context. It can actually be helpful and more genuine to talk about mistakes or decisions you regretted. If you demonstrate **how you overcame those experiences**, the reader will see you in a different and more genuine context.
3. Telling a story can be a useful way to portray yourself in a unique and genuine way. Stories are unique to your life, and it is an opportunity to showcase your abilities and personality without coming off as disingenuous. When telling a story, make sure to highlight your role, the challenge you faced, how you overcame it, and what you learned from it.



MAKE EACH SENTENCE COUNT

YOU ARE LIMITED BY A WORD COUNT IN MOST ESSAYS, SO IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF EACH SENTENCE YOU WRITE.

As you look over your draft, comb through each sentence and ask yourself, what is the purpose of this sentence? What does it contribute to my essay? Does it help answer the question? Could this sentence be worded in a simpler fashion? This will help guide your writing style to be as direct, concise, and impactful as possible.



GET CREATIVE

THE MORE CREATIVE YOU ARE = THE MORE UNIQUE YOUR RESPONSE CAN BE. TRY TO FIND A WAY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS DIFFERENTLY BY AVOIDING CLICHÉ RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS.

1. Try to look at the application questions ahead of time even if you still aren't ready to write. This allows you to brainstorm ideas that will be of use when you begin writing.
2. Attempt to briefly answer the question prior to doing research on the internet, as many of the ideas will be overused and oversaturated amongst other applicants and intaking too much information can cloud your original thoughts.

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ESSAY STYLE TIPS



MEET ALL CRITERIA

BEFORE SUBMITTING AN ESSAY YOU SHOULD ALWAYS MAKE SURE ALL OF THE CRITERIA ARE MET.

Sometimes criteria can be very clearly stated but oftentimes when an essay/application prompt is very open ended, it may be less clear what the reader is looking for. In these cases, knowing your audience and the context of the essay will help to set you on the right track.



BE CONSISTENT

EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN WRITING STYLE, WHICH IS GOOD BECAUSE ALL BOOKS WOULD BE THE SAME OTHERWISE.

However, it is important to recognize your personal writing style and to maintain a consistent voice when writing applications.



UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION

MAKE SURE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE QUESTION EXPECTS OF YOU.

When applying to various clubs/organizations, questions are often framed to determine whether you align with the goals/values of the club. Ask yourself what the application committee is expecting from each question and answer accordingly.

!!! SHOW INTEREST

HAVE A GENUINE INTEREST IN THE CLUB/ORGANIZATION.

It is hard to fake sincerity, so if you are applying for a position in a club and/or organization make sure you are actually interested and committed to improving the club/organization. It is most likely that this passion will be unconsciously showcased in your writing.



BE GROUNDED/REALISTIC

DON'T TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY.

Oftentimes clubs/organizations are more casual than job or graduate school applications, and are generally more focused on meeting people with shared interests and having fun. Show this side of yourself in your written application. Especially if the recruitment committee consists of students, chances are they want passionate people who they can see themselves working well with.

The following document provides specific examples of how you can integrate specific tips into your writing as well as a checklist to be used during the writing process:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hU15wUPCFnA4yIS2AUvyRfaeysrdhK2UtQ-rf_uwrYY/edit



LOOK AT THE PROGRAM'S CORE VALUES

WHEN ANSWERING EACH QUESTION, MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE LOOKED AT THE DIFFERENT CRITERIA THAT THE SCHOOL/PROGRAM VALUES (E.G. CANMED ROLES, UOFT CLUSTERS, ETC.)

You want to always have these in mind when writing your application, you can write down the respective criteria that fits the question underneath the application question to ensure that you are always keeping it in mind.



REFLECT RATHER THAN STATE

In your essays, try not to summarize your activities too much. It's good to quantify achievements, but the most important part is your reflection. Many applicants have very similar extracurriculars, but what separates them is how they reflected on their experiences and were able to draw unique lessons from it.

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MEDICAL/GRADUATE SCHOOL APP TIPS: CONTINUED



GET INPUT FROM OTHERS

If you are reapplying, feel free to reuse essays but make sure that you have reflected on which essays are beneficial to you and which ones require a rebuild. This is where your friends and family could really help you. As well, it would be best to have someone who has been admitted into medicine to look over your essays.



RESEARCH THE QUESTION WHEN APPROPRIATE

If they provide you with a quote or a reference within the question, you should always look into it. This will provide further perspective from the author and will allow you to align yourself better when attempting to answer the question.



TRY TO BE AS PERSONABLE AS POSSIBLE

This is your chance to display your personality and it will make the process easier as you will be speaking to who you are.



BE CONCISE

Be concise and give definitive answers. Due to the short word count, every word in your essay should have a purpose. It would likely work in your favour to give definitive answers rather than being on the fence with your opinions.



ADJUST WRITING STYLE ACCORDINGLY

Make sure that the writing style you're using is appropriate for the respective question, as some schools prefer greater storytelling and fluff while others may prefer more concise writing.

While receiving a lot of tips and advice can be overwhelming, it is important that you try and keep these in mind when writing your essays to save you some time and possibly frustration. We hope this has been a helpful read, and we wish you the best of luck in your future pursuits!

