

A Few Essay Suggestions

DO :

- **Narrow your topic** to something doable in 650+/- words
- Begin with a hook to engage the reader's attention (1st paragraph is most important!)
- Tell a **personal** story that's significant for you
- **Organize** your subject matter into paragraphs
- Use transitional words (however, though, but, and) to smooth the flow of ideas
- **Conclude with an epiphany, revelation, or discovery**
- **Use "I"** unless the prompt instructs otherwise
- Speak in a "real" voice constructed in **conversational, informal language**, using contractions, figures of speech, dialogue, etc.
- **Employ specific, concrete, examples** that SHOW (i.e. describes) rather than TELL
- Include **active, vivid verbs** ("ambled" vs. "walked," "sped" vs. "went," etc.)
- **Vary sentence lengths and types** (short, punchy sentences, as well as longer, compound and complex sentences; declarations, questions, commands)
- Make your language **fresh and creative** (use metaphors, similes, etc.)
- Incorporate humor, understatement, irony, etc., to make tone interesting
- **Keep your essay within the word or character limit**

DON'T :

- Write a 5-paragraph, formal essay
- Editorialize positively or negatively about the university, its sports teams, or any other aspect of the institution, unless the prompt directs you to do so
- Plagiarize in full or in part
- Begin with vague generalizations about truth, beauty, life, death, etc.
- Submit a poem, play, or stream-of-conscious monologue, unless so directed by the prompt
- Merely summarize in your concluding paragraph
- Use text-message spellings (thx 4 yr attn.)
- Include profanity or offensive language
- Rely on cliches or trite, stale words and phrases ("bored to tears," "drew a blank," "scared to death," etc.)
- Quote more than a few lines from anyone (and if you do, cite the author/title)
- Use only general, broad language that merely tells and does not show
- Rely on the same verbs repeatedly (is, are, were; do, did; go, went; has, have, had; get, got)
- Use 'SAT' words that you don't know of to make yourself seem smarter, as the tone should be conversational (you want to sound like a high school senior)