

Editing & Revision – COLLEGE ESSAY

Once you have written your first draft, it is best to let it ferment for a few days. So give yourself time to write your application essay; it takes more than one night! Letting your first draft sit for a few days is important to get away from what you have written before you edit so you can look at what you have written with a more objective and fresher eye.

Editing is not polishing. So many students make this mistake. Polishing is fixing up punctuation, changing usage errors, dotting the i's and crossing the t's. The editing stage is not that neat.

When editing you need to

- Re-organize your paragraphs,
- Rewrite your paragraphs to develop them more,
- Rewrite sentences and whole sections for details,
- Rewrite sentences to make them stronger and more varied,
- Experiment with word changes, and
- CUT, cut whole pieces of things that do not lead you directly to answering the essay prompt.

Here is a checklist to help you through the editing process:

Content

- Check out your beginning paragraph – it does not have to have a hook and a thesis statement; rather it should capture the reader's attention.
- Now look at the conclusion – does it pull your ideas together and speak to the essay prompt?
- Does your overall essay show, not tell?
- Are there specific details throughout? There should be no generalities or vagueness.
- Is the voice of the essay personal and human? You as a person with your sense of humor and your way of relating to friends should show through.
- Are you using active voice, strong verbs, and interesting phrases?
- Is your wording simple and clear rather than studious, plodding and abstract?

Structure

- Does each paragraph move forward to your final point?
- Are the paragraphs ordered well for effect and to avoid confusion?
- Are there transitions between paragraphs and a smooth flow from one thought to another?
- Are your sentences clear and varied?

When you check these things out and then correct them by re-writing, you are doing a true edit. The polishing can be the final step.