

MRS. NEWBERRY'S TIPS ON HOW NOT TO WRITE A COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ESSAY

- Be careful not to go into too many *who* and *what* details in your anecdotes. This tendency is similar to giving too much plot detail in a literary analysis. Instead, focus on the *why*, *how*, and *so what* details. Think about what the admissions boards are looking for. Do they need to know all of the names of your friends or all of your sports statistics? No. They want to know what effect those events had on you as a person.
- Don't ramble or write long, wordy sentences. Use simple, clear language that gets your complex ideas across. You can be descriptive with a few carefully-chosen words.
- Don't use overgeneralizations or superlatives. Is it really necessary that you be the very *best* at something? Would you literally do *anything* for your community? You can be emphatic and honest at the same time. Consider your ethos, and don't oversell yourself. It is okay to be enthusiastic and positive, but be real, too.
- Watch that you don't sound arrogant or prescriptive. You may certainly offer an idea for a solution to a problem, but don't sound smug or condescending about it. If our world's problems were so simple to solve, then they wouldn't be problems, right? Instead, express the problem and your desire to fix it. Then offer some ideas, hopes, and plans for making a difference.
- Be careful about going negative. If you talk about a bad event in your life, be sure to talk about how you have grown from it. Think about your tone. Are you sounding whiny? Petty? Like a victim? Angry? While all of these are valid emotions, a college essay is not the place to express them. Are you looking for pity or respect? Be honest, but don't wallow. This is not the time for a tell-all confessional. Be real, but also be optimistic.
- Your essay is not a resume. The admissions folks already have a list of your accomplishments. Instead, the essay is where your personality can shine through. Can a reader know who you are as a person by your words? Put forth your best self and trust in being real. You don't want your essay to sound like every other that they read, and you want it to sound authentically like *you*.
- Don't forget to proofread your work! Figure out where the commas go and what verb form you need. Watch vague pronoun reference errors and spelling. If you need support, ask me. That is what I'm here for.