

Top 10 Ways to Underwhelm the Admissions Committee in Your College Essay

1. Using tricks to meet essay length requirements. (Ex: wider margins, larger font)
2. Writing clichés or using cliché words. (Ex: “eye-opening”, “If I knew then what I know now”)
3. Not answering the full prompt. If there are multiple layers to a prompt, address them all. If they ask for ONE item, do not write about three.
4. Writing to fill the page. Quality is more important than quantity.
5. Crossing the line from edgy to inappropriate. Do not write anything sexual, gross or tasteless.
6. No offensive language.
7. Using an overly self-effacing/arrogant tone.
8. Mentioning the wrong school/program. Don’t send an essay to UNC talking about how much you like Duke.
9. Using an essay as an additional resume’.
10. Using spellcheck as a replacement for proofreading. “I tutored little kids every day after school” rather than “I tortured little kids every day after school”.