

An Effective Application Essay

A Checklist for Self-Evaluation

In terms of content, the essay...

- answers the question asked
- has a thesis, a clear central point
- is analytical rather than simply descriptive (it shows rather than tells)
- is unified, focused and cohesive (includes only information relevant to the topic)
- anticipates the reader's needs

In terms of organization, the essay...

- has a clear sense of introduction (avoids throat clearing, addresses the question directly)
- has a clear sense of conclusion (pulls things together at the end rather than stopping abruptly)
- carries the reader along by using effective transitions (“First of all,” or “In contrast,”)

In terms of expression, the essay...

- achieves an appropriate tone (confident, enthusiastic, upbeat, reflective)
- avoids inappropriate tones (groveling, pretentious, whining, arrogant, cynical)
- is written in a voice that is authentic, that sounds like me (at my most articulate moments)
- is concise and to the point rather than long winded and circuitous
- avoids cliched observations, phrases, expressions and words
- avoids slang (except when used intentionally for a specific effect)

In terms of correctness, the essay...

- observes the conventions of grammar and usage (no errors)
- observes the conventions of punctuation (no errors)
- has no spelling errors
- has been PROOFREAD carefully for errors
- has been proofread again
- has been proofread yet again
- provides details and examples to support and enliven generalizations