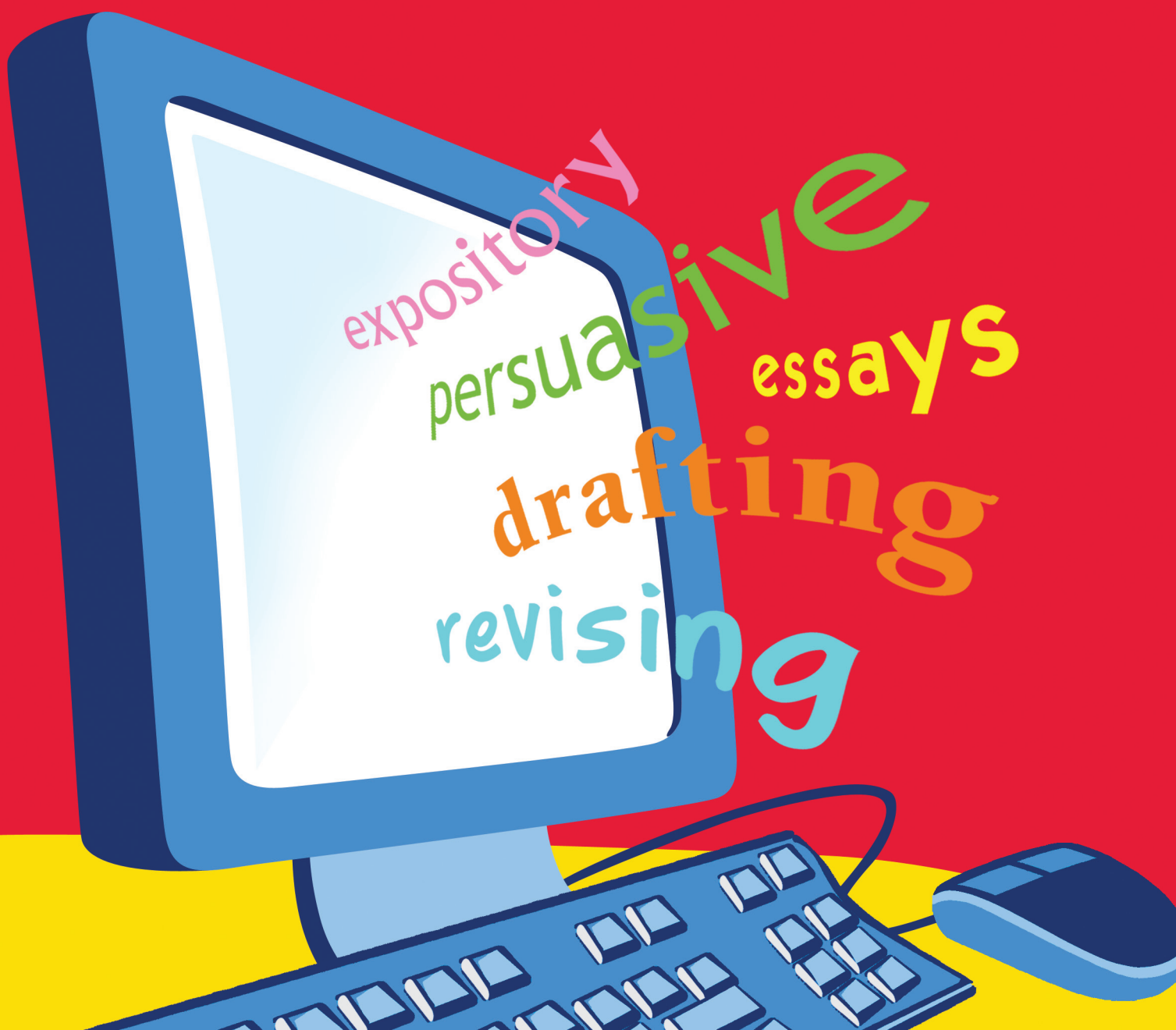


Level F

SADLIER

Writing Workshop



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THE WRITING PROCESS

PREWRITING

Finding an Idea

- Freewrite or brainstorm ideas for a topic.
- Choose and narrow a topic.
- Gather details.

Making a Plan

- Identify your purpose (to explain, persuade, entertain, describe, or convey an experience).
- Identify what your audience does and does not know.
- Organize your details in an outline.

DRAFTING

- Concentrate on getting your ideas down—not on fixing errors!
- Keep your audience in mind as you write.
- Write a complete introduction, body, and conclusion.

REVISING

- Evaluate your draft, identifying ways to improve it.
- As you review your draft, focus on five of the six traits of good writing (ideas and content, organization, sentence fluency, word choice, and voice).
- Ask a peer reviewer to give feedback on your draft.

EDITING AND PROOFREADING

- Look for mistakes in the sixth trait of good writing, conventions (grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling).
- Proofread your draft.

PUBLISHING AND PRESENTING

- Write a final version of your paper.
- Share your writing with your audience.

Writing a College Essay

The essays you write in high school will help prepare you for the essays you will write as part of the college admissions process. Admissions essays let colleges know who you are as an individual.

LESSON 1

Write an Introduction



A strong college admissions essay begins with an introductory paragraph.

While all colleges will have some requirements related to their admissions essay, some will be less specific than others.

Many college admissions essays request that you. . .

- ✓ describe yourself or an incident from your life
- ✓ explain why the college is a good fit for you
- ✓ state and support your position on an issue

Tip

Present yourself as the person you are in your college essay. Be yourself. Insincerity can turn off your readers.

Whichever kind of essay you write, your purpose is always to inform the admissions board about yourself. Show them who you are by drafting an insightful, clear, and well-organized essay. A well-organized essay always begins with an **introduction**.

The introduction to a college essay should. . .

- ✓ grab the reader's attention with a surprising detail or quotation
- ✓ get right to the point and avoid unnecessary words
- ✓ restate the question in your own words
- ✓ state your thesis

Sample Admissions Prompt

Describe an important event from your life, and explain how it has changed you.

Sample Introduction

Restates the question and grabs attention

Includes a thesis statement that identifies the essay's two main points

Without a doubt, the most important event in my life was the day I met my biological mother. I was adopted, so I had never met either of my biological parents. My adoptive parents are wonderful, supportive, and kind. Without them, I wouldn't be the person I am today. However, I always felt a little piece of me was missing, as if I were driving around in a car with no seat or with only three wheels. With the help of my adoptive family, I was able to locate my mother and fill in those missing parts. Our meeting changed me in two important ways.

Activity A



On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following introduction from a student's college admissions essay. This essay responds to the question, "Why is our college a good fit for you?" Use the checklists on the previous page as a guide. Invent details if necessary.

There are lots of really good schools out there. There are practically too many to choose from! In fact, I've had a really hard time picking out which schools I will apply to. However, I have always thought of myself as the kind of person who would be going to a school that focused on things like science and math. That is why I think that I am the best kind of candidate for your college.

Activity B

Write your own introduction for an essay in response to the college admissions question asked at the top of this page. Be sure to grab your reader's attention, state your thesis, and restate the question in your own words.

LESSON

2

Write a Thesis



A **thesis statement** is more than just the restatement of the topic. It is your opinion and the reason you hold that opinion.

Your **thesis statement** should appear in your introduction. It is often the last line in that paragraph, but it could also be the first sentence. The examples in this lesson and in Activity A are all in response to the prompt, “Please tell the selection committee something interesting or important about yourself.”

Tips for Drafting a Thesis Statement

1. State a clear opinion and give a reason you hold it.

No Opinion I will tell you all about the summer I rode my bike across the state of Oregon.

Opinion The summer I biked across Oregon had a major effect on me, changing my outlook on health, humanity, and happiness.

2. Avoid unnecessary wordiness.

Wordy There is no doubt that my abilities will certainly flourish if I am admitted to the excellent arts program at your school.

Concise I will flourish in your university’s excellent arts program.

3. Stay on topic. A strong thesis addresses one topic only.

Off Topic I have many good qualities, and I have also had many interesting experiences overseas.

On Topic I am convinced that my strongest quality is my willingness to accept change.

Activity A Revise the thesis statements below in accordance with the tips on page 125.



- 1.** In this essay I'm going to tell you about the day I learned to cross-country ski.

- 2.** I have been excited by the journalism program offered by you at your school, which is why I want to attend.

- 3.** I believe that the most important issue facing the whole world today is the threat we face from the terrible problem of global warming, and I have worked hard to lessen that threat.

- 4.** Now I am going to tell you why I am the ideal candidate.

- 5.** I will describe in this essay the importance of being involved in local politics, which I learned about while working on a campaign.

Activity B Reread the introduction you wrote for Lesson 1. Use the guidelines described on the previous page to revise your introduction's thesis statement.

LESSON

3

Organize Ideas in the Body



The **body** of your essay contains all of the **details** you will present in **support** of your thesis.

Tip

Be sure to add transitions that link your ideas. Transitions can also prevent your sentences from sounding choppy.

The way you organize **supporting details** in the body depends in part on the kind of essay you are writing.


Common Types of Organization

- **Order of importance** If you are writing an essay that explains why you are a good candidate for a particular college, organize details by order of importance—from most important to least, or vice versa.
- **Chronological** If you are writing a narrative essay or describing an event from your life, organize details chronologically. Present details from your story in the order they occurred. If you include a flashback, use a transition such as *Earlier* or *Two weeks before* so that the break in sequence is clear to your reader.

Tips for Writing Body Paragraphs

- Try to reveal details or qualities about yourself that are not obvious from reading the rest of your application.
- Be specific, and appeal to your reader's senses. Use precise, colorful words, and avoid vague or clichéd supporting details.
- Present yourself in a positive light. You may need to write several drafts before you are able to strike a tone that is confident without being boastful.
- Since this is a *personal* essay, don't adopt a formal or scholarly tone. Use correct grammar and spelling, but write in a style that feels natural to you.
- Write honestly and directly, so your individuality shines through.

Activity A Below are one student's notes in response to the prompt, "How have you grown intellectually during your years in high school?" On a separate sheet of paper, revise the notes into two or three body paragraphs. Do not include information unrelated to your main idea. Invent details as needed.

- 
- each of the past three school years, worked with Mrs. Alice Hill, Bethel High School's art instructor, to set up our annual student exhibition
 - working with Mrs. Hill always very interesting
 - over the past two summers, interned at a local art gallery: the Glass Gallery
 - at Glass, helped organize art shows, mailed fliers, and occasionally worked with visiting artists
 - Glass Gallery is a really interesting place to work—lots of interesting artists display their art there
 - this year tutored younger and struggling students in English and math
 - published three articles in our school's newspaper about the art scene here in town—really liked writing those articles, and my friends liked them, too

Activity B Draft body paragraphs for the essay you worked on in Lessons 1 and 2. Before drafting, list details that support your thesis.

Activity C When you have completed Activity B, exchange papers with a partner. Evaluate each other's work for organization, specificity, and mechanics.

LESSON 4

Write a Conclusion



Like all strong essays, a college admissions essay must end with a **conclusion**.

Tech Tip

Most colleges and universities process applications electronically and will require that you provide an e-mail address. Make sure your e-mail address sounds professional.

A strong conclusion includes these traits:

1. **It restates the essay's thesis.** In your conclusion, restate the thesis of your admissions essay in new language. Also, briefly touch on each of your essay's main ideas.
2. **It wraps up your essay.** Make sure you have fully answered the question or prompt and created a sense of completeness.
3. **It sounds fresh and original.** Avoid clichés such as “I guess I’ll never be the same,” “It was the greatest day of my life,” “Only time will tell whether I made the right choice,” and “I learned a valuable lesson.”

Below are some concluding paragraphs in response to this prompt: “How do you think Colton University will help you to achieve your future goals?”

Lacks compelling ending

Weak I visited Colton and really enjoyed it, and all my friends are going there, so I think I’ll be really happy. Everyone I know says it’s an excellent school. I hope I get the chance to go there. That’s really all I have to say.

Restates thesis and ends strongly

Strong Attending Colton University would allow me to work toward my dream of becoming an art therapist. Because Colton has one of the strongest art-therapy programs in the country, I would be able to take courses with experts in the field. I could also gain invaluable practical experience through internships. Art therapy is a demanding field, but with an education from Colton, I feel confident that I will be able to meet those challenges.

Activity A The conclusions below are in response to the prompt, “What factors led you to pursue an education at Hess College?” On a separate sheet of paper, revise each conclusion to make it follow the guidelines on the previous page. Invent details as necessary.



Even though there are lots and lots of good schools out there, I think I belong at your university. Your math and science programs are wonderful, and I believe that I would flourish in them. I hope you will accept my application.

Hess College is the place for me because I love theater. It's been my life for the past four years. I have many other good qualities, too. You won't regret accepting me as a student.

Activity B Write a conclusion for the essay you wrote in this chapter. As you write your conclusion, follow the guidelines established in this lesson.

Activity C When you have completed Activity B, exchange papers with a partner. Use the numbered list on the previous page as a guide.

Activity D Revise, edit, and proofread the essay you have worked on in this chapter. Follow these guidelines to check your work.

- ✓ Reread your essay, and make sure that it completely answers the question.
- ✓ Check that you have included a strong and clear thesis that is supported by relevant and interesting details.
- ✓ Check for commonly confused words or words with multiple meanings that your spell checker might miss.
- ✓ Reread, checking the spelling of proper names.
- ✓ Correct any run-on sentences, fragments, or other grammatical errors.

WORKSHOP

Writing Model

An excellent essay for a college application. . .

- ✓ presents a clear thesis statement in the introduction
- ✓ is written in a natural-sounding, but still formal, voice
- ✓ includes specific details that reveal positive qualities about the writer
- ✓ is well organized, with no extraneous information
- ✓ presents a memorable conclusion that restates the thesis

Below is a response to this prompt: “Describe a turning point in your life. Explain how that turning point affected you.”

The thesis repeats key words from the prompt and piques reader interest.

The writer organizes the essay by describing experiences at the copy desk, in the features department, and in the sports department.

A Life in Print

Words have been part of my life since I learned how to read at age three. I have always wanted to work with words, but until recently I wasn't sure what kind of work that would be. An important turning point in my life happened this year—at the rodeo, of all places—and gave me insight into what career I want to pursue.

This year I had an opportunity to get out of the classroom and into a newsroom. My high school offers an internship program two days a week, and I was matched with a local newspaper called the *Daily Free Press*. I spent time working on the copy desk, in features, and in sports.

Working on the copy desk was the most familiar assignment for me. Through my work on the school paper, I already knew how to write headlines, copyedit, proofread stories, and cut copy to fit the available space. At the “Free,” the volume of copy was much higher, and the content was significantly more varied. I had certainly never edited a business story before, nor had I ever proofread pages of sports results. Working on the copy desk honed my attention to detail and broadened my understanding of the different sections of the newspaper.

continued

The essay reveals a positive quality that the writer has: the ability to adapt to new situations.

The writer's tone is straightforward and friendly but does not lapse into informality.

Specific details keep the essay lively and memorable.

The conclusion wraps up the essay and emphasizes the writer's strengths.

In features, I helped primarily with entertainment articles and restaurant reviews. When the features department invited readers to contribute humorous stories of Thanksgiving dinner disasters, I sorted the entries, selected a group, and interviewed the authors. When new restaurants opened, I took a friend or another intern with me and reviewed them. No one ever suspected that a 17-year-old would be a food critic.

My favorite experience was working in the sports section. February was a busy time for the sports reporters because the college basketball season was ending, spring training for baseball was starting, and the rodeo was in town. The sports editor usually sent a different reporter to the rodeo each day. This year I was able to step in and cover the entire week of events, since it coincided with school vacation. I was responsible for filing one story each day, each a minimum of 15 column inches. My press pass gave me access to nearly every area of the rodeo, including the chutes, where the bull riders mounted the bulls. Over the course of the week, I chose to focus on the people who made the rodeo special. I wrote profiles of the junior champion barrel rider, a medic, a rodeo clown who brought his pet bull to visit students who were deaf and blind, and the founder of the professional bull riders circuit. It was a life-changing experience. How else but as a sports reporter could I see such nail-biting competitions—and get paid to talk to the people who made them happen?

At last, I had found my niche in sports reporting. I look forward to continuing my work in this field and improving my skills in the journalism program at Alaska State.

Assignment

Write an essay based on the prompt at the top of the previous page. Explain how the turning point you experienced affected your beliefs, your personality, or your goals in life.

Writer's Handbook

Capitalization, p. 133

Abbreviations, p. 133

Numbers, p. 134

Punctuation, p. 134

Spelling, p. 138

Grammar, p. 139

Style, p. 142

CAPITALIZATION

- If a family title is preceded by an article (*a*, *an*, or *the*), a possessive noun (*David's*, *children's*), or a possessive pronoun (*his*, *my*, *their*, and so on), the title should not be capitalized. Otherwise, the title should be capitalized. This rule applies to most other titles of people, such as *king*, *doctor*, *judge*, and *mayor*.

My mom is a lawyer.

Uncle Norman is visiting.

I gave Dad a call.

- When a directional word refers to a definite geographical or political region, it should be capitalized. Otherwise, the word should not be capitalized.

The Civil War was fought between the North and South.

We traveled southeast for two miles.

- In titles with more than two words, capitalize the first and last word. Capitalize the words in between except for articles (*a*, *an*, *the*) and short prepositions, such as *of*, *for*, and *to*.

The Call of the Wild

- In the closing of a letter, capitalize only the first word.

Very truly yours,

ABBREVIATIONS

- Abbreviations of titles and time are acceptable in any type of writing.

Mr. Fisher arrived at 1:15 p.m.

- Do not use abbreviations of place names or measurements in formal writing.

GA (Georgia) cm (centimeter)

- Two types of abbreviations are acronyms and initialisms. An acronym is a word formed from the first letter of several words. Initialisms are similar to acronyms but cannot be pronounced as words.

**laser (light amplification by
stimulated emission of radiation)**

LOL (laughing out loud)