

Five tips for a good college Essay:

- 1. Be natural; Don't tense up**
- 2. Consider your audience**
- 3. Find a good opener**
- 4. Avoid cliches**
- 5. Use details**

Writing Tip #3: Find a good opener.

Compare these openers

- Throughout my life, I've been fortunate enough to live in a variety of different places. In each new city, I learned something more about myself and about others.”
- It's hard to find a good steak in Loma Mira, California. In fact, it's hard to find a lot of life's essentials in a small desert town of only 1,200 people. The day before my family moved there when I was six, my mother told me that there wasn't even an ice cream shop there. I did not take the news well.”

Examples of good openers

- “Even at age nine, I had a knack for business. That's when the snow cone empire first took off.”
- “I think Holden Caulfield is a jerk. There. I said it. I've been dying to say it ever since we read Catcher in the Rye in my sophomore English class.”
- “I can make a mean hamburger. In fact, I'm a professional. I've got four years of professional hamburger experience.”
- “Everything to do with horses smells. They smell, their saddles smell, all their blankets and medicines smell. So, as a competitive rider, I pretty much stink all the time.”

Writing Tip #5: Use details.

Example of writing without details

“I was extremely nervous before the orchestra started playing. However, when I saw my dad in the audience, it helped me to relax and play well.”

Example of writing with detail

“I sat there on the stage, my violin resting on my shoulder. I could feel it shaking against my chin. I’d never been so nervous. I wondered if the entire audience could see me trembling. They must have thought I was having some sort of seizure. I scanned across the dimly lit crowd of 200 people, looking for that familiar face. And somehow, I found my dad. We locked eyes and he smiled at me. Then, from behind the video camera he was holding, he mouthed those words. They were the same words he’d used before I went up to bat in little league, before I went onstage in my first school play, and now, before I was about to play as the first chair violinist in my community orchestra – the biggest performance of my life. I couldn’t hear him, but I could make out those words – “Go get ‘em.” As the conductor raised his wand, I smiled at my dad, nodded back at him, and started to play.”

Example of writing without detail

“Our soccer team’s bond is not limited to the field. We are together at school almost every day, and share a sense of sisterhood. This is what makes soccer so rewarding.”

Example of writing with detail

“On game days, you’ll notice our sea of blue jackets weaving in and out of the other students in the hallway. You can hear the “flop...flop” of our Adidas soccer sandals that are just now getting comfy after three years of wear. You can always spot Gina, our goalkeeper, who is perpetually covered in bandages and gauze. The poor girl always looks like she requires immediate medical attention. Sometimes, when I’m in that sea of blue jackets, I’ll slow down and drop to the back of the pack. I do this so that I can look at my team, and every time I do, I can’t help but smile. I know how hard we work, how much talent we’ve brought together, and how badly we want to bring a championship banner to our school. But more importantly, I like these girls. I like my team. I’m proud to wear on of those blue jackets. I love soccer, but it’s my team who makes it all worth it.”