

Lesson 8

Finishing the College Essay

Materials Needed:
pen or pencil or computer
access to Internet or library



Vocabulary: These words will help you understand this lesson.

Word/Term	Definition
edit	to check the content; to revise by changing or adding to content as needed; also to proofread for spelling, grammar, sentencings, punctuation errors
cliché	a trite, overused expression

Journal Entry

Picture someone reading your essay. What impression do you want this person to have of you after reading your essay? What would your best friend say about you if he/she were talk to the person reading your essay? What nice things would they add? Remember no one except you reads these entries. Fill a page in your journal reflecting on this.

Putting It All Together

Now that you have prepared an outline, you are ready to begin writing your first draft. You will do this on a separate sheet of paper or the computer, using your outline as a guide. Remember that you must include an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Follow the extra tips listed on the next page to help in writing your first draft.

1. **If you get stuck on the introduction, write the body first.** Sometimes it is difficult to write a good introduction, so do not be afraid to write the body of the essay first. After doing this you may then go back and write the introduction. However, the body of the essay must respond to what the thesis will be.
2. **Skip lines.** Skipping lines will give you room to insert information that you forgot to include in the first draft.
3. **Do not worry about grammar or spelling.** Do not correct your mistakes as you are writing. In this first draft, focus on getting your ideas organized and flowing. There will be time to edit and revise later.

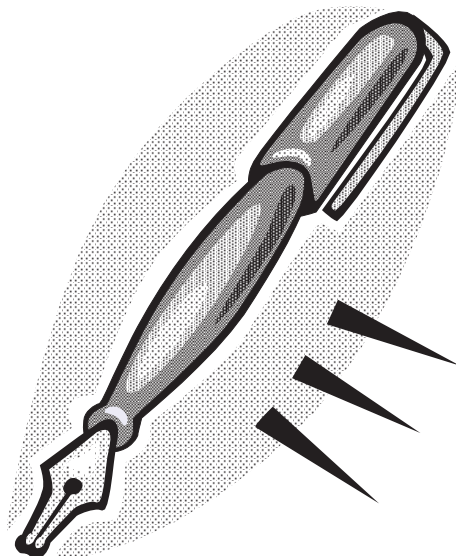
Now, using the advice given, write your draft. Let the creative energy flow and try not to be too “stiff” in your writing. Remember, this is a personal essay, so it leaves room to be a bit humorous and playful. You want to remain formal, but you can also reveal some emotions.

Checking for Content

As you read your draft for the first time, make sure your **thesis** is clearly stated in the introduction. **Highlight your thesis.** Then check for sentences or phrases that do not stick to the topic, as well as for areas that need more examples and details. As you do this, cross off any unnecessary details and add some which strengthen your thesis.

In the **body of the essay**, be sure that your ideas and details flow smoothly into one another and that the transitions between them are not choppy or confusing.

In the **conclusion**, be sure that you have summarized your main point. Do not leave the reader hanging; offer some type of resolution or *ending* to your essay.



Things to do when checking for content:

1. Use a different colored pen when adding new content.
2. Highlight the thesis.
3. Cross off non-supportive details and add new ones in unused lines and margins.
4. Check for smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs, making sure that you are not confusing the reader with quick changes.
5. Make sure you have summarized in the conclusion and have not added new information.

After checking for content, rewrite your essay. (Yes, you will write it several times before you have a final product.) Leave out the parts you crossed off and add the new information.

Grooming Your Grammar

After you have checked for content, check your grammar. Often times, a writer's ideas are difficult to understand because he or she has written incomplete or run-on sentences. You must make sure your essay is free of both of these nasty grammar mistakes along with many others. For this portion of the lesson, you will revise and edit your essay. Follow the steps given below to help you with this.

You will need to read your essay carefully in order to do a thorough job. Read it out loud also. (Much of this has already been checked, but it never hurts to check twice.)

1. Is the thesis clear? Find it and highlight it.
2. Have you given examples which support the thesis?
3. Did you summarize in the conclusion?

If you still do not have some of these elements, go back and add them.

Answer the following questions about your essay.

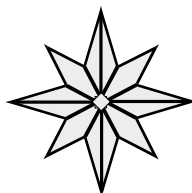
1. Are all of the sentences complete? A good way to check this is to read your essay starting with the LAST sentence first. Also, check for run-on sentences.
2. Is the punctuation correct? Check your commas, periods, apostrophes, quotation marks, semi-colons, and question marks.
3. Are there any words misspelled? Circle the words that you think might be misspelled and then look them up.
4. Have you eliminated extra words and avoided words like “a lot,” “very,” “cool,” “nice,” clichés or current slang words? Have you overused a word?

After you have checked for grammar, ask another person, perhaps your **PASS** mentor, to read your essay. You should do this because writers often miss their own mistakes.

4. The Final Product

You will need to write at least one more draft of your essay. This is a lot of work for one essay, but when you receive your first acceptance letter from a college, the work will prove to be well worth it. Now, using all of the corrections made in the last lesson, rewrite your essay on the following pages. This time, really think about the grammar, sentence structure, and spelling because this is your final draft. If you are unsure of the spelling of a word, look it up before writing it. (Of course, this should have already been done.)

Notes or questions for your mentor / teacher:



End of Lesson 8