

# **HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE WRITING TASKS OF THE NEXT GENERATION TOEFL**

- A Complete Course with 187 Sample Essays

*By ToeflEssays.com*

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## 1. The TOEFL Independent Writing Task

The writing section of the next generation TOEFL test measures your ability to write in English in an academic setting. There are two writing tasks in the Next Generation TOEFL test:

- ◆ **Writing based on reading and listening**
- ◆ **Writing based on your own knowledge and experience**

This book contains detailed explanations on how to prepare for the knowledge and experience based writing task (e.g. the independent writing task), as well as 185 sample essays written on all the ETS official essay topics. This book will also walk you through on how to write the reading and listening based writing task (the new addition to the TOEFL test).

In the following chapters, we will take you through steps on how to organize your ideas, form an outline and develop organization, write the essay, and finally proofread your essay.

For students who's English is their second language, the best way to prepare for the TOEFL writing test is to familiar themselves with all the official writing topics, read through sample essays in this book, and practice to write at least ten essays.



The writing section directions and sample questions can be found at ETS's official website:

<http://www.ets.org/toefl/nextgen/samples/ng220.html>

Download a full collection of official TOEFL Writing Topics:

<http://ftp.ets.org/pub/toefl/989563wt.pdf>

You can find the TOEFL essay scoring guide at:

<http://www.ets.org/toefl/learners/pbt/writingscore.html>

Test of Written English Guide and sample essays:

<http://ftp.ets.org/pub/toefl/tweguid.pdf>

### 1.1.1. Understanding the question

For the independent writing task (writing based on knowledge and experience), there are eight types of essay questions:

- ✓ Agree/Disagree    ✓ Choice/Preference    ✓ Compare/Contrast    ✓ Good/Bad
- ✓ If/What            ✓ What/How            ✓ Why                    ✓ Describe

The purpose of this classification is to help you get started with understanding the essay questions, and avoid spending too much time on the planning phase.

#### Types of Questions

1. **Agree/ Disagree** - This type of question lists an opinion and asks if you agree with it or not, then explain
2. **Choice/ Preference** - This type of question lists two options and asks you to take a side, then explain your choice
3. **Compare/ Contrast** - You need to compare and/or contrast 2 or more things/views
4. **Good/ Bad** - First decide which is good, and then explain. Sometimes you need to discuss both sides (advantages/disadvantages)
5. **If/What** - What will do you in a certain scenario?
6. **What/How** - Answer the topic question then explain your answer
7. **Why** - Answer the topic question then explain your answer
8. **Describe** - Describe something or a phenomenon.

Directions: Read the question below. You have 30 minutes to plan, write, and revise your essay. Typically, an effective response will contain a minimum of 300 words.

#### Question:

**Some people think that governments should spend as much money as possible on developing or buying computer technology. Other people disagree and think that this money should be spent on more basic needs.**

Which one of these opinions do you agree with? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer. (Topic 100)

This is a choice/preference question, since it offers two different views for you to choose from. You should pick a side first and develop your essay from there. Comparing the two sides will not give you extra marks, because the question does not require you to do so.



### Exercise – Match Questions with Categories

Each of the questions below corresponds to one of the categories in the chart. Find a category for each question.

182 Many people have a close relationship with their pets. These people treat their birds, cats, or other animals as members of their family. In your opinion, are such relationships good? Why or why not?

174 Every generation of people is different in important ways. How is your generation different from your parents' generation?

124 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is more important for students to study history and literature than it is for them to study science and mathematics.

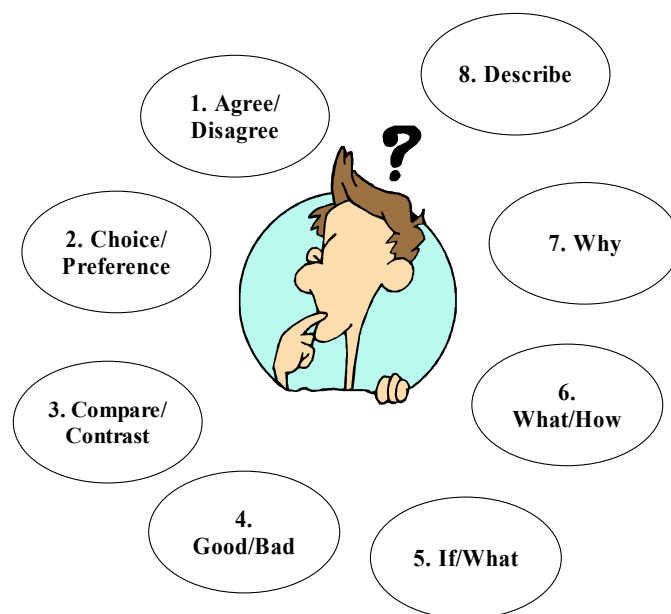
89 - If you could travel back in time to meet a famous person from history, what person would you like to meet?

177 A friend of yours has received some money and plans to use all of it either \* to go on vacation \* to buy a car. Your friend has asked you for advice. Compare your friend's two choices and explain which one you think your friend should choose.

71 Which would you choose: a high-paying job with long hours that would give you little time with family and friends or a lower-paying job with shorter hours that would give you more time with family and friends?

172 When students move to a new school, they sometimes face problems. How can schools help these students with their problems?

180 Movies are popular all over the world. Explain why movies are so popular.



Answer Key: 1-124 2-71 3-177 4-182 5-89 6-174 7-180 8-172

## 185 A house or a business?

Confronted with choices concerning purchase, people are always trying to make the wisest decisions. One of the intriguing questions is whether to buy a house or a business if one has enough money. In my view, to buy a business will be more satisfactory because a business can contribute more to our career, function as an investment and bring better opportunities to future life.

To begin with, owning a business can serve as a life time career. Many people prefer to work for a huge company. Nevertheless, many more would rather start their own business. The reason is understandable: when people own a business, they dedicate more to the development of the business. The up and downs of the business will affect their life directly. To manage the business successfully requires the owner to devote to its administration and management skills. The owner needs to pay close attention to the market and the competitions, by taking business as a career. On the other hand, owning a house will never offer people any career opportunity.

Next, a promising and well-managed business is an invaluable investment. Everyone anticipate his belongings to increase. Some people put an inappropriate portion of their money into stock, hoping that a surging stock market will inflate their investment. However, this sort of action is much more dangerous than investing in one's

own business. The value of a house will sometimes increase, but an individual cannot control any of the changes since the value of a house depends mostly on the real estate market. Virtually when people reflect carefully to decide which business to buy and devote their time and energy to their own businesses, mostly they will succeed in the business and accumulate both profit and experience.

In addition, after people choose an appropriate business and acquire it, the managing process will be rewarding. Most human beings cherish the spirit more than material capital. By managing a business the owner will learn new knowledge, practice up-to-date skills, and establish self-esteem. All these are the precious foundations for a brighter future. It is evident that owning a house cannot fulfill people's needs in this aspect.

Still there exist some objections such as that a house will be more rewarding because people enjoy a warm home. As discussed above, a business will help the owner to earn more money. Probably the efficient investment will bring the owner a bigger house in a short period of time.

In summary, to buy a business after careful consideration will render people a better life. If we hope to encourage us with a good investment and happier life, to buy a business is a good choice.

Directions: Read the question below. You have 30 minutes to plan, write, and revise your essay. Typically, an effective response will contain a minimum of 300 words.

### Question:

**Good teachers are more important to a child's development than good parents.**

Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Support your choice with specific examples.

### Sample idea list

*Main Idea: Agree - Teachers are more important than parents*

- Good teachers are expert educators
- Training; experience with children; role model
- Schools are the best place for children to receive education & develop characters

A child spends his/her initial five to six years at home with his/her parents or caretakers. At the age 5 to 6, while still living with his/her parents, s/he starts to go to school to receive formal education. So who are the most important to the child's development is an interesting topic discussed among educators. In my opinion, I agree with the statement that good teachers are more important than good parents.

Good teachers are expert educators. They received formal training in various academic fields and teaching itself. They can provide students with knowledge in various academic subjects. In addition, they have experience in dealing with various types of students. Furthermore, good teachers not only teach children academic knowledge, but also set a good example to children. Many children regard their teachers as role models. Teachers roles are irreplaceable.

Schools provide a suitable environment for children's growth. Schools are equipped with qualified teaching and supporting staff and adequate study and sports facilities, all contributing to children's growth. Schools also organize field trips and practicum from time to time in order to broaden students' views about nature and the society. At school, a child can appreciate the value of friendship and teamwork by playing with their classmates. With the help of good teachers students can develop their characters and social skills. Therefore schools with good teachers are the best place for children to receive education and develop their characters.

While good parents play the crucial role of nourishing the child, helping build the child's character, and helping develop the child's hobbies such as music and sports, they can do little to help with the child's academic study, which is the critical part of the child's development, unless those parents are themselves good teachers. Therefore, teachers are the most important people for children's personal growth and development. Every child should go to school to receive their formal education.



# Congratulations!

If you have worked your way to this point in this book, you have done some of the best preparation possible to maximize your performance on the TOEFL essay test.

Please take advantage of the free TOEFL essay rating service provided by [Wayabroad.com](http://Wayabroad.com) --- submit your TOEFL essay and get your free scores in a week. Get the help and preparation you need before you take the TOEFL writing test. This service is totally free.



## Other Resources

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[Rosetta Stone Language Software](#)



## College Application Essay Writing Tips

### Step One: Brainstorming

The most important part of your essay is the subject matter. You should expect to devote about 1-2 weeks simply to brainstorming ideas. To begin brainstorming a subject idea consider the following points. From brainstorming, you may find a subject you had not considered at first.

What are your major accomplishments, and why do you consider them accomplishments? Do not limit yourself to accomplishments you have been formally recognized for since the most interesting essays often are based on accomplishments that may have been trite at the time but become crucial when placed in the context of your life.

Does any attribute, quality, or skill distinguish you from everyone else? How did you develop this attribute?

Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? Why are they your favorites?

What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty?

Have you ever struggled mightily for something and succeeded? What made you successful?

Have you ever struggled mightily for something and failed? How did you respond?

Of everything in the world, what would you most like to be doing right now? Where would you most like to be? Who, of everyone living and dead, would you most like to be with? These questions should help you realize what you love most.

Have you experienced a moment of epiphany, as if your eyes were opened to something you were previously blind to?

What is your strongest, most unwavering personality trait? Do you maintain strong beliefs or adhere to a philosophy? How would your friends characterize you? What would they write about if they were writing your admissions essay for you?

What have you done outside of the classroom that demonstrates qualities sought after by universities? Of these, which means the most to you?

What are your most important extracurricular or community activities? What made you join these activities? What made you continue to contribute to them?

What are your dreams of the future? When you look back on your life in thirty years, what would it take for you to consider your life successful? What people, things, and accomplishments do you need? How does this particular university fit into your plans for the future?

If these questions cannot cure your writer's block, consider the following exercises:

### ***1. Ask for Help from Parents, Friends, Colleagues, etc.***

If you cannot characterize yourself and your personality traits do not automatically leap to mind, ask your friends to write a list of your five most salient personality traits. Ask your friends why they chose the ones they did. If an image of your personality begins to emerge, consider life experiences that could illustrate the particular traits.

### ***2. Consider Your Childhood***

While admissions officers are not interested in reading about your childhood and are more interested in the last 2-4 years of your life, you might consider events of your childhood that inspired the interests you have today. Interests that began in childhood may be the most defining parts of your life, even if you recently lost interest. For instance, if you were interested in math since an early age and now want to study medicine, you might incorporate this into your medical school admissions essay. Analyze the reasons for your interests and how they were shaped from your upbringing.

### ***3. Consider Your Role Models***

Many applicants do not have role models and were never greatly influenced by just one or two people. However, for those of you who have role models and actually aspire to become like certain people, you may want to incorporate a discussion of that person and the traits you admired into your application essay.

### ***4. Read Sample Admissions Essays***

Before you sat down to write a poem, you would certainly read past poets. Before writing a book of philosophy, you would consider past philosophers. In the same way, we recommend reading sample admissions essays to understand what topics other applicants chose. EssayEdge maintains an archive of over 100 free sample admissions essays. **Click here** to view sample essays that worked.

### ***5. Goal Determination***

Life is short. Why do you want spend 2-6 years of your life at a particular college, graduate school, or professional school? How is the degree necessary to the fulfillment of your goals? When considering goals, think broadly. Few people would be satisfied with just a career. How else will your education fit your needs and lead you to a fulfilling life?

If after reading this entire page you do not have an idea for your essay, do not be surprised. Coming up with an idea is difficult and requires time. Actually consider the questions and exercises above. Without a topic you feel passionate about, without one that brings out the defining aspects of you personality, you risk falling into the trap of sounding like the 90 percent of applicants who will write boring admissions essays. The only way to write a unique essay is to have experiences that support whatever topic you come

up with. Whatever you do, don't let the essay stress you out. Have fun with the brainstorming process. You might discover something about yourself you never consciously realized.

Good Luck!

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## Step Two - Selecting an Essay Topic

### *By EssayEdge.com: Our Editing Makes the Difference*

Having completed step one, you should now have a rough idea of the elements you wish to include in your essay, including your goals, important life experiences, research experience, diversifying features, spectacular nonacademic accomplishments, etc. You should also now have an idea of what impression you want to make on the admissions officers.

We should remark that at this stage, undergraduate applicants have a large advantage over graduate school applicants. Whereas nobody questions a high school student's motivation to attend college, graduate and professional school applicants must directly address in their essays their desire to study their selected field.

You must now confront the underlying problem of the admissions essay. You must now consider topics that will allow you to synthesize your important personal characteristics and experiences into a coherent whole while simultaneously addressing your desire to attend a specific institution. While most admissions essays allow great latitude in topic selection, you must also be sure to answer the questions that were asked of you. Leaving a lasting impression on someone who reads 50-100 essays a day will not be easy, but we have compiled some guidelines to help you get started. With any luck, one or two topics, with small changes, will allow you to answer application questions for 5-7 different colleges, although admissions officers do appreciate essays that provide convincing evidence of how an applicant will fit into a particular academic environment. You should at least have read the college's webpage, admissions catalog, and have an understanding of the institution's strengths.

Consider the following questions before proceeding:

Have you selected a topic that describes something of personal importance in your life, with which you can use **vivid personal experiences** as supporting details?

Is your topic a gimmick? That is, do you plan to write your essay in iambic pentameter or make it funny. You should be very, very careful if you are planning to do this. We recommend strongly that you do not do this. Almost always, this is done poorly and is not appreciated by the admissions committee. Nothing is worse than not laughing or not being amused at something that was written to be funny or amusing.

Will your topic only repeat information listed elsewhere on your application? If so, pick a new topic. Don't mention GPAs or standardized test scores in your essay.

Can you offer vivid supporting paragraphs to your essay topic? If you cannot easily think of supporting paragraphs with concrete examples, you should

probably choose a different essay topic.

Can you fully answer the question asked of you? Can you address and elaborate on all points within the specified word limit, or will you end up writing a poor summary of something that might be interesting as a report or research paper? If you plan on writing something technical for college admissions, make sure you truly can back up your interest in a topic and are not merely throwing around big scientific words. Unless you convince the reader that you actually have the life experiences to back up your interest in neurobiology, the reader will assume you are trying to impress him/her with shallow tactics. Also, be sure you can write to admissions officers and that you are not writing over their heads.

Can you keep the reader's interest from the first word. The entire essay must be interesting, considering admissions officers will probably only spend a few minutes reading each essay.

Is your topic overdone? To ascertain this, peruse through old essays. EssayEdge's 100 free essays can help you do this. However, most topics are overdone, and this is not a bad thing. A unique or convincing answer to a classic topic can pay off big.

Will your topic turnoff a large number of people? If you write on how everyone should worship your God, how wrong or right abortion is, or how you think the Republican or Democratic Party is evil, you will not get into the college of your choice. The only thing worse than not writing a memorable essay is writing an essay that will be remembered negatively. Stay away from specific religions, political doctrines, or controversial opinions. You can still write an essay about Nietzsche's influence on your life, but express understanding that not all intelligent people will agree with Nietzsche's claims. Emphasize instead Nietzsche's influence on **your** life, and not why you think he was wrong or right in his claims.

In this vein, if you are presenting a topic that is controversial, you must acknowledge counter arguments without sounding arrogant.

Will an admissions officer remember your topic after a day of reading hundreds of essays? What will the officer remember about your topic? What will the officer remember about you? What will your lasting impression be?

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### **Step Three: Writing the Essay, Tips for Success**

***By EssayEdge.com: Our Editing Makes the Difference***

Even seemingly boring topics can be made into exceptional admissions essays with an innovative approach. In writing the essay you must bear in mind your two goals: to persuade the admissions officer that you are extremely worthy of admission and to make the admissions officer aware that you are more than a GPA and a standardized score, that you are a real-life, intriguing personality.

Unfortunately, there is no surefire step-by-step method to writing a good essay. EssayEdge editors at <http://www.EssayEdge.com/> will remake your essay into an awesome, memorable masterpiece, but every topic

requires a different treatment since no two essays are alike. However, we have compiled the following list of tips that you should find useful while writing your admissions essay.

## ***1. Answer the Question***

You can follow the next 11 steps, but if you miss the question, you will not be admitted to any institution.

## ***2. Be Original***

Even seemingly boring essay topics can sound interesting if creatively approached. If writing about a gymnastics competition you trained for, do not start your essay: "I worked long hours for many weeks to train for XXX competition." Consider an opening like, "Every morning I awoke at 5:00 to sweat, tears, and blood as I trained on the uneven bars hoping to bring the state gymnastics trophy to my hometown."

## ***3. Be Yourself***

Admissions officers want to learn about you and your writing ability. Write about something meaningful and describe your feelings, not necessarily your actions. If you do this, your essay will be unique. Many people travel to foreign countries or win competitions, but your feelings during these events are unique to you. Unless a philosophy or societal problem has interested you intensely for years, stay away from grand themes that you have little personal experience with.

## ***4. Don't "Thesaurize" Your Composition***

For some reason, students continue to think big words make good essays. Big words are fine, but only if they are used in the appropriate contexts with complex styles. Think Hemingway.

## ***5. Use Imagery and Clear, Vivid Prose***

If you are not adept with imagery, you can write an excellent essay without it, but it's not easy. The application essay lends itself to imagery since the entire essay requires your experiences as supporting details. Appeal to the five senses of the admissions officers.

## ***6. Spend the Most Time on Your Introduction***

Expect admissions officers to spend 1-2 minutes reading your essay. You must use your introduction to grab their interest from the beginning. You might even consider completely changing your introduction after writing your body paragraphs.

**Don't Summarize in your Introduction.** Ask yourself why a reader would want to read your entire essay after reading your introduction. If you summarize, the admissions officer need not read the rest of your essay.

**Create Mystery or Intrigue in your Introduction.** It is not necessary or recommended that your first sentence give away the subject matter. Raise questions in the minds of the admissions officers to force them to read on. Appeal to their emotions to make them relate to your subject matter.

## **7. Body Paragraphs Must Relate to the Introduction**

Your introduction can be original, but cannot be silly. The paragraphs that follow must relate to your introduction.

## **8. Use Transition**

Applicants continue to ignore trans>

## **9. Conclusions Are Critical**

The conclusion is your last chance to persuade the reader or impress upon them your qualifications. In the conclusion, avoid summary since the essay is rather short to begin with; the reader should not need to be reminded of what you wrote 300 words before. Also do not use stock phrases like "in conclusion, in summary, to conclude, etc." You should consider the following conclusions:

Expand upon the broader implications of your discussion.

Consider linking your conclusion to your introduction to establish a sense of balance by reiterating introductory phrases.

Redefine a term used previously in your body paragraphs.

End with a famous quote that is relevant to your argument. Do not **try** to do this, as this approach is overdone. This should come naturally.

Frame your discussion within a larger context or show that your topic has widespread appeal.

Remember, your essay need not be so tidy that you can answer why your little sister died or why people starve in Africa; you are not writing a "sit-com," but should forge some attempt at closure.

## ***10. Do Something Else***

Spend a week or so away from your draft to decide if you still consider your topic and approach worthwhile.

## ***11. Give Your Draft to Others***

Ask editors to read with these questions in mind:

WHAT is the essay about?

Have I used active voice verbs wherever possible?

Is my sentence structure varied or do I use all long or all short sentences?

Do you detect any cliches?

Do I use transition appropriately?

Do I use imagery often and does this make the essay clearer and more vivid?

What's the best part of the essay?

What about the essay is memorable?

What's the worst part of the essay?

What parts of the essay need elaboration or are unclear?

What parts of the essay do not support your main argument or are immaterial to your case?

Is every single sentence crucial to the essay? This **MUST** be the case.

What does the essay reveal about your personality?

Could anyone else have written this essay?



How would you fill in the following blank based on the essay: "I want to accept you to this college because our college needs more \_\_\_\_\_."

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## College Admissions Essay Samples

### Personal Essay

Three times a week after school I go visit my dad. When I enter the hospital room where he has lain in a coma since his accident, my eyes often wander to the lone golf ball my mom placed at his bedside. Just six months ago, my father was driving a golf cart across the street that bisects the local golf course when he was hit by a car. He suffered severe brain injury, and the doctors have ruled out any possibility of him waking up again. When I look at him lying in bed, frail but peaceful as if he were asleep, it's hard not to dwell on the "what ifs": what if he hadn't played golf that day? What if he hadn't been behind the fence when the black Camry plowed into it? What if I still had the chance to ask all those questions that choke me up when I see him in the hospital? I can't pretend that I have developed enough distance from the event to draw conclusions about life, but I am already beginning to see myself in very different terms.

Ironically, through this accident my dad has given a chance to face reality head-on. Before the accident, my relationship with him was warm but fraught with tension. He never seemed satisfied with what I did and reprimanded me for every wrong step I took. He had strong opinions about my hairstyle, clothes, friends, and--above everything else--my academic performance. When I was not sitting at my desk in my room, he invariably asked me why I had nothing to do and told me I should not procrastinate. He stressed that if I missed my teenage years of studying, I would regret it later. He didn't like me going out with my friends, so I often ended up staying at home--I was never allowed to sleep over at other students' homes. All I remember from my past high school years is going to school and coming back home. I was confused by my parents' overprotective attitude, because they emphasized independence yet never actually gave me a chance to be independent.

In terms of career, my dad often lectured me about which ones are acceptable and which are not. He worried incessantly about whether I would ever get into college, and he often made me feel as if he would never accept my choices. Rather than standing up for myself, I simply assumed that if I studied hard, he would no longer be disappointed in me. Although I tried hard, I never seemed to get it quite right; he always found fault with something. As if that weren't enough, he frequently compared me to my over-achieving older brother, asking me why I couldn't be more like him. I must admit that at times I even questioned whether my dad really loved me. After all, he never expressed admiration for what I did, and my attempts to impress him were always in vain.

In retrospect, I don't think I fully understood what he was trying to tell me. These days, when I come home to an empty house, it strikes me just how dependent on my parents' care and support I have been so far. Now that my dad is in the hospital and my mom is always working, I see that I must develop the strength to stand alone one day. And, for the very first time, I now realize that this is exactly what my dad was trying to make me see. I understand that he had a big heart, even though he didn't always let it show; he was trying to steer me in the right direction, emphasizing the need to develop independence and personal strength. He was trying to help me see the world with my own eyes, to make my own judgments and decide for myself what I would eventually become. When my dad was still with us, I took all of his advice the wrong

way. I should not have worried so much about living up to my parents' expectations; their only expectation of me, after all, is that I be myself.

In mapping out my path to achieving my independence, I know that education will allow me to build on the foundations with which my parents have provided me. My academic interests are still quite broad, but whereas I was once frustrated by my lack of direction, I am now excited at the prospect of exploring several fields before focusing on a particular area. Strangely, dealing with my father's accident has made me believe that I can tackle just about any challenge. Most importantly, I am more enthusiastic about my education than ever before. In embarking on my college career, I will be carrying with me my father's last gift and greatest legacy: a new desire to live in the present and the confidence to handle whatever the future might bring.

## Story Essay

I walked into the first class that I have ever taught and confronted utter chaos. The four students in my Latin class were engaged in a heated spitball battle. They were all following the lead of Andrew, a tall eleven-year-old African-American boy.

Andrew turned to me and said, "Why are we learning Latin if no one speaks it? This is a waste of time."

I broke out in a cold sweat. I thought, "How on Earth am I going to teach this kid?"

It was my first day of Summerbridge, a nationwide collaborative of thirty-six public and private high schools. Its goal is to foster a desire to learn in young, underprivileged students, while also exposing college and high-school students to teaching. Since I enjoy tutoring, I decided to apply to the program. I thought to myself, "Teaching can't be that difficult. I can handle it." I have never been more wrong in my life.

After what seemed like an eternity, I ended that first class feeling as though I had accomplished nothing. Somehow I needed to catch Andrew's attention. For the next two weeks, I tried everything from indoor chariot races to a Roman toga party, but nothing seemed to work.

During the third week, after I had exhausted all of my ideas, I resorted to a game that my Latin teacher had used. A leader yells out commands in Latin and the students act out the commands. When I asked Andrew to be the leader, I found the miracle that I had been seeking. He thought it was great that he could order the teacher around with commands such as "jump in place" and "touch the window." I told him that if he asked me in Latin to do something, I would do it as long as he would do the same. With this agreement, I could teach him new words outside the classroom, and he could make his teacher hop on one foot in front of his friends. Andrew eventually gained a firm grasp of Latin.

Family night occurred during the last week of Summerbridge. We explained to the parents what we had accomplished. At the conclusion, Andrew's mom thanked me for teaching him Latin. She said, "Andrew wanted to speak Latin with someone, so he taught his younger brother."

My mouth fell open. I tempered my immediate desire to utter, "Andrew did what?" I was silent for a few seconds as I tried to regain my composure, but when I responded, I was unable to hide my surprise.

That night I remembered a comment an English teacher had made to me. I had asked her, "Why did you become a teacher?"

She responded with a statement that perplexed me at the time. She said, "There is nothing greater than

empowering someone with the love of knowledge." Now, I finally understood what she meant.

When I returned to Summerbridge for my second summer, the first words out of Andrew's mouth were, "Is there going to be a Latin class this year?"

## Detail Essay

I close my eyes and can still hear her, the little girl with a voice so strong and powerful we could hear her halfway down the block. She was a Russian peasant who asked for money and in return gave the only thing she had--her voice. I paused outside a small shop and listened. She brought to my mind the image of Little Orphan Annie. I could not understand the words she sang, but her voice begged for attention. It stood out from the noises of Arbat Street, pure and impressive, like the chime of a bell. She sang from underneath an old-style lamppost in the shadow of a building, her arms extended and head thrown back. She was small and of unremarkable looks. Her brown hair escaped the bun it had been pulled into, and she occasionally reached up to remove a stray piece from her face. Her clothing I can't recall. Her voice, on the other hand, is permanently imprinted on my mind.

I asked one of the translators about the girl. Elaina told me that she and hundreds of others like her throughout the former Soviet Union add to their families' income by working on the streets. The children are unable to attend school, and their parents work fulltime. These children know that the consequence of an unsuccessful day is no food for the table. Similar situations occurred during the Depression in the United States, but those American children were faceless shoeshine boys of the twenties. This girl was real to me.

When we walked past her I gave her money. It was not out of pity but rather out of admiration. Her smile of thanks did not interrupt her singing. The girl watched us as we walked down the street. I know this because when I looked back she smiled again. We shared that smile, and I knew I would never forget her courage and inner strength. She was only a child, yet was able to pull her own weight during these uncertain times. On the streets of Moscow, she used her voice to help her family survive. For this "Annie," there is no Daddy Warbucks to come to the rescue. Her salvation will only come when Russia and its people find prosperity.

## Personal Growth Essay

Tom Zincer succeeded in his task. My science class's first field trip took place on a bitter cold February day in Maine. Tom, our science teacher, led the group of relatively puzzled, well-bundled students into the forest. I was right behind Tom, and the sound of his red boots breaking through the thin layer of ice that covered the crusty snow seemed to bounce off the trees and scare away the few singing birds that had not migrated south for the winter. We stopped fourteen times during that four-hour field trip to hear Tom ramble on about the bark of "this" deciduous tree and the habitat that "this" coniferous tree needs to grow. We examined animal droppings and tracks in the snow and traced a bird's song back to its singer. This was all meaningless to me. I was cold and bored and wanted the field trip to end.

I would later write several essays in my journal about the fact that writing a detailed seven-page analysis of the field trip took all the beauty out of the event. I would complain to Tom about how boring and mundane his class was and how impossible it was to be so "anally" observant. I argued that no field trip could ever be enjoyable if we had to write down and later analyze the percentage of deciduous and coniferous trees, the air temperature, the amount of snow on the ground, the slope of the course taken, the change in temperature over the day, and a plethora of other minutia. Basically, I was lazy. No, no. I was not lazy. I was just not ready; I was not yet ready to become an observer.

"Sam, just trust me on this one. You'll thank me later," Tom said at the conclusion of our meeting. I had

gone to see Tom privately in order to discuss how I could survive his class. The minutia was killing me, and my slow death was reflected in my dismal grade. Upon leaving that meeting, I made a personal and academic decision to develop my observational skills, both to please my teacher and to avoid the disappointment of another "D+."

On my next field trip, I set out into the forest with two pencils cocked between my two ears like guns ready to fire. My teeth were clenched with the determination to stay focused throughout the entire field trip and write down every word that man uttered. However, I constantly felt myself drifting, and while my mind wandered, the group advanced significantly ahead of me, and I missed the sighting of another bird. I ran up to the group just in time to hear Tom start his lecture about a nearby rock formation. Instead of listening, I was asking my friend to see his Picasso-like rendition of the bird. I, therefore, fell behind on the lecture, and so went the endless cycle: fall behind, try to catch up, fall more behind. When it came time to rewrite my field notes in legible form, I stared at a piece of paper that consisted of smudged squiggly lines and eventually tears. Frustrated and disappointed, I retreated back to my cabin to seek refuge.

I quickly got undressed and slipped under my blanket for warmth, comfort, and most importantly protection. After I gave myself a few minutes to calm down, I took out the wet crumbled piece of paper from my pocket and tried to redraw a stick figure of a bird. The twelve stick figures, representing the twelve different birds we saw, looked exactly the same, and trying to redraw each body part of each bird to scale was so difficult that I felt like each pen stroke was met with a ton of resistance. Giving up, I pushed the piece of paper back into my pocket and lay down on my back. I saw Simon sitting in his characteristically feminine position on Ethan's bed. Simon was sitting, facing Ethan, with his legs crossed and his right hand casually nestled on his right kneecap, his foot twitching like the tail of a happy dog. Ethan was lying on his side with his big black headphones cupped around his ears, reading Faulkner. As my head swiveled, I noticed Conrad, sleeping, as usual, with his blanket clenched tightly under his chin, with both fists. I heard Fred and Rob discussing the pitfalls of modern education and could see Donald's head rhythmically moving back and forth, in sync with Jimi Hendrix. I then realized that I too was part of my environment. I realized that I was a silent participant, and more importantly, I realized that I was an observer.

On my next field trip, I had one pencil nonchalantly nestled on top of my right ear. I set out with no mission in mind and had no vengeance in my heart. I intentionally lagged behind my fellow classmates in order to get a wider, broader perspective of the environment. Applying what I learned in my cabin, I was able to engage all of my senses and could attempt to take in the vastness of it all. When we returned from our field trip, the task of doing a "rewrite" did not seem so odious, and my pencil flew across the page like a writer who just experienced an epiphany and wants to get his idea down before he forgets it. I drew every bird, tree, and rock as best I could, and although they were not perfect, they were exactly what I saw.

## **Hobbies and Interests Essay**

The sun is still asleep while the empty city streets await the morning rush hour. As in a ritual, my teammates and I assemble into the dank, dimly-lit locker room at the Rinconada Park Pool. One by one, we slip into our moist drag suits and then make a mad run from the locker room through the brisk morning air to the pool, stopping only to grab a pull-buoy and a kick-board. Coastal California cools down overnight to the high forties. The pool is artificially warmed to seventy-nine degrees, and the clash in temperatures creates a plethora of steam on the water's surface, casting a scene more appropriate for a werewolf movie. Now the worst part: diving head-first into the glacial pond. I think of friends still tucked in their warm beds as I conclude the first warm-up laps. Meanwhile, our coach emerges through the fog. He offers no friendly accolades, just a stream of instructions and exhortations.

Thus begins another workout. 4,500 yards to go, then a quick shower and five-minute drive to school. Another 5,500 yards are on our afternoon training schedule. Tomorrow, the cycle starts all over again. The objective is to cut our times by another 1/10th of second. The end goal is to have that tiny difference at the end of a race that separates success from failure, greatness from mediocrity. Somehow we accept the

pitch--otherwise, we'd still be fast asleep beneath our blankets. Yet sleep is lost time, and in this sport time is the antagonist. Coaches spend hours in specialized clinics, analyzing the latest research on training techniques and experimenting with workout schedules in an attempt to unravel the secrets of defeating time.

My first swimming race was when I was ten years old and an avid hockey player. My parents, fearing that I would get injured, redirected my athletic direction toward swimming. Three weeks into my new swimming endeavor, I somehow persuaded my coach to let me enter the annual age group meet. To his surprise and mine, I pulled out an "A" time. National "Top 16" awards through the various age groups, club records, and finally being named a National First Team All-American in the 100 Butterfly and Second Team All-American in the 200-Medley Relay cemented an achievement in the sport. Reaching the Senior Championship meet series means the competition includes world-class swimmers. Making finals will not be easy from here: these 'successes' were only separated from failure by tenths of a second. And the fine line between total commitment and tolerance continues to produce friction. Each new level requires more weight training, longer weekend training sessions, and more travel. Time that would normally be spent with friends is increasingly spent in pursuit of the next swimming objective.

In the solitude of the laps, my thoughts wander to events of greater significance. This year, my grandmother was hit with a recurrence of cancer, this time in her lungs. A person driven by good spirits and independence now faces a definite timeline. On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, my grandfather in Japan also contracted the disease. His situation has been corrected with surgery--for now, anyway. In the quest to extend their lives, they have both exhibited a strength that surpasses the struggles I confront both in sports and in life. Our different goals cannot be compared, yet my swimming achievements somehow provide a vicarious sense of victory to them. When I share my latest award or partake with them a story of a triumph, they smile with pride as if they themselves had stood on the award stand. I have the impression that my medals mean more to them than I will ever understand.

Life's successes appear to come in small increments, sometimes mere tenths of a second. A newly learned skill, a little extra effort put on top of fanatical training routine, a good race day, or just showing up to a workout when your body and psyche say "no" may separate a great result from a failure. What lies in between is compromise, the willpower to overcome the natural disposition to remain the same. I know that my commitment to swimming carries on to other aspects of life, and I feel that these will give me the strength to deal with very different types of challenges.

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## **Put Harvard-Educated Editors to Work for You!**

### **Graduate School Personal Statement Secrets**

*EssayEdge.com contains thousands of pages of free admissions essay advice by Harvard-educated editors.*

The best way to approach your personal statement for graduate school is to imagine that you have five minutes with someone from the admissions committee. How would you go about making the best case for yourself while holding the listener's interest? What would you include and omit in your story? Figuring out the answer to these questions is critical to successfully preparing an effective statement.

To arrive at these answers, you should begin by asking yourself two specific questions:

Why have I chosen to attend graduate school this specific field, and why did I choose to apply to this particular school's program?

What are my qualifications for admission?

The answers will not necessarily come easily to you, but this exercise will have great practical benefit in readying you to write an outstanding personal statement. By answering each question thoroughly, you will have given much thought to yourself, your experiences, and your goals, thereby laying the groundwork for formulating an interesting and persuasive presentation of your own personal story.

As the founder of EssayEdge.com, the Net's largest admissions essay prep company, I have seen firsthand the difference a well-written application essay can make. Through its free online admissions essay help course and 300 Harvard-educated editors, EssayEdge.com helps tens of thousands of student each year improve their essays and gain admission to graduate schools ranging from Harvard to State U.

Having personally edited over 2,000 admissions essays myself for EssayEdge.com, I have written this article to help you avoid the most common essay flaws. If you remember nothing else about this article, remember this: *Be Interesting. Be Concise.*

### **Why Graduate School?**

Graduate school is a serious commitment, and it may have been your goal for a long time. Describing your early exposure to a field can offer effective insight into your core objectives. Watch out, however, that you do not your point in such a clichéd, prepackaged way as to make your reader cringe. For example, you should not start your essay, "I have always wanted to?." or "I have always known that \_\_\_\_\_ was my calling." Instead, you should discuss specific events that led to your interest in the field.

Graduate school is, of course, a means to an end, and admissions committees prefer students who know where they're going and to what use they'll put their education (though the occasional soul-searcher, who may exhibit exceptional raw potential, is welcomed). For many people, the long-term goal is to work in academia, and to differentiate yourself in such cases, you can stress more specific objectives such as your research interests.

Note: Read the instructions carefully. Sometimes schools will ask for a statement of purpose describing your specific research interests in lieu of, or in addition to, a personal statement that emphasizes your

character and qualities. For these types of essays, you can assume that a faculty member will be reading your statement, but it should still be accessible enough for a non-specialist to understand. Remember that such essays should also still aim to engage the reader in a way that conveys your own enthusiasm for the subject matter.

Avoid mistakes like discussing the school's rank or prestige, or simply offering generic praise. Instead, mention faculty members by name and indicate some knowledge of their work. Consider contacting faculty members first and discussing their current research projects and your interest in studying under them. Then refer to these contacts in your essay.

## Why Am I Qualified?

The way to prove your qualification is not to list attributes you believe you possess but to discuss concrete experiences that show your abilities and qualities. As always, details are paramount. The rest of your application has already summarized your accomplishments and your activities. Show the reader what you did in concrete terms, and again, highlight your active roles.

The experiences that demonstrate your qualification are not necessarily distinct from those that explain your motivation. You shouldn't plan on dividing the essay into two separate sections for each, but rather organize the structure by topic and extrapolate insights as they develop. It's important that you think of the essay as an integrated whole, not as a checklist of questions you must answer.

Focus on research experience, since research will be your main job for the duration of your studies. Be specific about what you did. If you worked for a year under a professor, you might consider emphasizing one particular project and exploring that in depth. The experience does not have to have been a major undertaking: Any practical experience can be used as long as you demonstrate your enthusiasm and aptitude for the field of study.

Remember to keep the discussion personal. Do not get bogged down in minute details and jargon. Ultimately, the focus of the story should remain on you and your growth or success.

## TOP 10 GRADUATE SCHOOL ESSAY WRITING TIPS

### 1. Don't Write a Term Paper.

As a prospective graduate student, you may be tempted to try to impress your reader with an already tight grasp of academic style. Resist this temptation! You will have plenty of time to produce labyrinthine sentences and sophisticated vocabulary. Your reader will have seen too many essays to appreciate bewilderingly advanced prose. Write clearly and personally.

### 2. Don't Bore the Reader. Do Be Interesting.

Admissions officers have to read hundreds of essays, and they must often skim. Abstract rumination has no place in an application essay. Admissions officers aren't looking for a new way to view the world; they're looking for a new way to view you, the applicant. The best way to grip your reader is to begin the essay with a captivating snapshot. Notice how the blunt, jarring "after" sentence creates intrigue and keeps the reader's interest.

**Before:** I am a compilation of many years of experiences gained from overcoming the relentless struggles of life.

**After:** I was six years old, the eldest of six children in the Bronx, when my father was murdered.

### **3. Do Use Personal Detail. Show, Don't Tell!**

Good essays are concrete and grounded in personal detail. They do not merely assert "I learned my lesson" or that "these lessons are useful both on and off the field." They show it through personal detail. "Show, don't tell" means that if you want to relate a personal quality, do so through your experiences without merely asserting it.

**Before:** If it were not for a strong support system which instilled into me strong family values and morals, I would not be where I am today.

**After:** Although my grandmother and I didn't have a car or running water, we still lived far more comfortably than did the other families I knew. I learned an important lesson: My grandmother made the most of what little she had, and she was known and respected for her generosity. Even at that age, I recognized the value she placed on maximizing her resources and helping those around her.

The first example is vague and could have been written by anybody. But the second sentence evokes a vivid image of something that actually happened, placing the reader in the experience of the applicant.

### **4. Do Be Concise. Don't Be Wordy.**

Wordiness not only takes up valuable space, but also confuses the important ideas you're trying to convey. Short sentences are more forceful because they are direct and to the point. Certain phrases, such as "the fact that," are usually unnecessary. Notice how the revised version focuses on active verbs rather than forms of "to be" and adverbs and adjectives.

**Before:** My recognition of the fact that the book was finally finished was a deeply satisfying moment that will forever linger in my memory.

**After:** Completing the book at last gave me an enduring sense of fulfillment.

### **5. Do Address Your Weaknesses. Don't Dwell on Them.**

The personal statement may be your only opportunity to explain deficiencies in your application, and you should take advantage of it. Be sure to explain them adequately: "I partied too much to do well on tests" will not help your application. The best tactic is to spin the negatives into positives by stressing your attempts to improve; for example, mention your poor first-quarter grades briefly, then describe what you did to bring them up.

### **6. Do Vary Your Sentences and Use Transitions.**

The best essays contain a variety of sentence lengths mixed within any given paragraph. Also, remember that transition is not limited to words like nevertheless, furthermore or consequently. Good transition flows from the natural thought progression of your argument.

**Before:** I started playing piano when I was eight years old. I worked hard to learn difficult pieces. I began to love music.

**After:** I started playing the piano at the age of eight. As I learned to play more difficult pieces, my appreciation for music deepened.



### **7. Do Use Active Voice Verbs.**

Passive-voice expressions are verb phrases in which the subject receives the action expressed in the verb. Passive voice employs a form of the word to be, such as was or were. Overuse of the passive voice makes prose seem flat and uninteresting.

**Before:** The lessons that have prepared me for my graduate studies were taught to me by my mother.

**After:** My mother taught me lessons that will prove invaluable as I pursue my research interests.

### **8. Do Seek Multiple Opinions.**

Ask your friends and family to keep these questions in mind:

- Does my essay have one central theme?
- Does my introduction engage the reader? Does my conclusion provide closure?
- Do my introduction and conclusion avoid summary?
- Do I use concrete experiences as supporting details?
- Have I used active-voice verbs wherever possible?
- Is my sentence structure varied, or do I use all long or short sentences?
- Are there any clichés, such as "cutting-edge" or "learned my lesson"?
- Do I use transitions appropriately?
- What about the essay is memorable?
- What's the worst part of the essay?
- What parts of the essay need elaboration or are unclear?
- What parts of the essay do not support my main argument?
- Is every single sentence crucial to the essay? This must be the case.
- What does the essay reveal about my personality?

### **9. Don't Wander. Do Stay Focused.**

Many applicants try to turn the personal statement into a complete autobiography. Not surprisingly, they find it difficult to pack so much information into such a short essay, and their essays end up sounding more like a list of experiences than a coherent, well-organized thought. Make sure that every sentence in your essay exists solely to support one central theme.

### **10. Do Revise, Revise, Revise.**

The first step in an improving any essay is to cut, cut, and cut some more. EssayEdge.com's free admissions essay help course and Harvard-educated editors will be invaluable as you polish your essay to perfection. The EssayEdge.com free help course guides you through the entire essay-writing process, from brainstorming worksheets and question-specific strategies for the twelve most common essay topics to a description of ten introduction types and editing checklists.

## **SAMPLE ESSAY**

I have been planning a career in geological sciences for several years, but as an undergraduate I concentrated on getting a solid background in math and science. After graduation, I took a job to allow myself time to thoroughly think through my plans and to expose myself to a variety of work situations. This strategy has been very valuable to me in rounding out my career plans.

During the past 18 months I have had firsthand experience with computers in a wide array of business applications. This has stimulated me to think about ways in which computers could be used for scientific research. One idea that particularly fascinates me is mathematical modeling of natural systems, and I think

those kinds of techniques could be put to good use in geological science. I have always enjoyed and been strong in areas that require logical, analytical thought, and I am anxious to combine my interest in earth science with my knowledge of, and aptitude for, computer-related work. There are several specific areas that I have already studied that I think would lend themselves to research based on computing techniques, including mineral phase relations in igneous petrology and several topics in structural geology.

I have had both lecture/lab and field courses in structural geology, as well as a short module dealing with plate tectonics, and I am very interested in the whole area. I would like to explore structural geology and tectonics further at the graduate level. I am also interested in learning more about geophysics. I plan to focus on all these areas in graduate school while at the same time continuing to build up my overall knowledge of geology.

My ultimate academic goal is to earn a Ph.D., but enrolling first in a master's program will enable me to explore my various interests and make a more informed decision about which specific discipline I will want to study in depth. As far as long-term plans, I hope to get a position at a university or other institution where I can indulge my primary impulse, which is to be involved in scientific research, and also try my hand at teaching.

My decision to focus on math and science as an undergraduate and to explore the computer industry after college has equipped me with a unique set of strengths to offer this program. The depth of my interest in geology has only grown in my time away from academia, and although I have identified several possible areas of specialization through prior studies, I look forward to contributing my fresh perspective on all subjects.

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## Graduate School Statement Samples

This section contains five sample graduate school personal statements:

### Why Graduate School? Essay

My freshman year at Harvard, I was sitting in a Postcolonial African Literature class when Professor Ngugi wa Thiong'o (the influential Kenyan author) succeeded in attracting me to the study of African literature through nothing more than a single sentence. He argued that, when a civilization adopts reading and writing as the chief form of social communication, it frees itself to forget its own values, because those values no longer have to be part of a lived reality in order to have significance. I was immediately fascinated by the idea that the written word can alter individual lives, affect one's identity, and perhaps even shape national identity.

Professor Ngugi's proposal forced me to think in a radically new way: I was finally confronted with the notion of literature not as an agent of vital change, but as a potential instrument of stasis and social stagnancy. I began to question the basic assumptions with which I had, until then, approached the field. How does "literature" function away from the written page, in the lives of individuals and societies? What is the significance of the written word in a society where the construction of history is not necessarily recorded or even linear?

I soon discovered that the general scope of comparative literature fell short of my expectations because it didn't allow students to question the inherent integrity or subjectivity of their discourse. We were being told to approach Asian, African, European, and American texts with the same analytical tools, ignoring the fact that, within each culture, literature may function in a different capacity, and with a completely different sense of urgency. Seeking out ways in which literature tangibly impacted societies, I began to explore other fields, including history, philosophy, anthropology, language, and performance studies.

The interdisciplinary nature of my work is best illustrated by my senior thesis ("Time Out of Joint: Issues of Temporality in the Songs of Okot p'Bitek"). In addition to my literary interpretations, the thesis drew heavily on both the Ugandan author's own cultural treatises and other anthropological, psychological, and philosophical texts. By using tools from other disciplines, I was able to interpret the literary works while developing insight into the Ugandan society and popular psychology that gave birth to the horrific Idi Amin regime. In addition, I was able to further understand how people interacted with the works and incorporated (or failed to incorporate) them into their individual, social, and political realities.

On a more practical level, writing the thesis also confirmed my suspicion that I would like to pursue an academic career. When I finished my undergraduate career, I felt that a couple of years of professional work would give me a better perspective of graduate school. I decided to secure a position which would grant me experiences far removed from the academic world, yet which would also permit me to continue developing the research and writing skills I needed to tackle the challenges of graduate school. I have fulfilled this goal by working as a content developer at a Silicon Alley web start-up for two years. The experience has been both enjoyable and invaluable -- to the point where colleagues glance at me with a puzzled look when I tell them I am leaving the job to return to school. In fact, my willingness to leave such a dynamic, high-paying job to pursue my passion for literature only reflects my keen determination to continue along the academic path.

Through a Masters program, I plan to further explore the issues I confronted during my undergraduate years by integrating the study of social, cultural, and linguistic anthropology into the realm of literature. I believe that, by adopting tools used in such disciplines, methods of inquiry can be formulated that allow for the interpretation of works that are both technically sound and sociologically insightful. Thus far, my studies have concentrated largely on African and Caribbean literatures, and I am particularly interested in studying these geographic areas in more specific historical and cultural contexts. I also seek to increase my knowledge of African languages, which will allow me to study the lingering cultural impact of colonialism in modern-day African literature. Eventually, I would like to secure an academic post in a Comparative Literature department, devoting myself to both research and teaching at the college level.

I believe the Modern Thought and Literature program at NAME is uniquely equipped to guide me toward these objectives. While searching for a graduate school that would accommodate my interdisciplinary approach, I was thrilled to find a program that approaches world literature with a cross-disciplinary focus, recognizing that the written word has the potential to be an entry point for social and cultural inquiry.

The level of scholarly research produced by the department also attracts me. Akhil Gupta's "Culture, Power, Place", for instance, was one of my first and most influential experiences with the field of cultural anthropology. Professor Gupta's analysis of the local, national, and foreign realms, achieved through a discussion of post-colonial displacement and mixed identifications, has led me to believe that -- given the complexity of modern societies -- comparative literature's focus on borders (national and linguistic) has been excessively arbitrary. Even more significant is the accurate rendering of individually-lived realities that may then be synthesized with other experiences. I believe that I could greatly benefit from Professor Gupta's teaching and guidance in applying these ideas to the literary arena, and I believe that his work is representative of the rigorous yet creative approach I would pursue upon joining the department.

## **Why Qualified? Essay**

Ever since my first psychology lecture, I have been fascinated by the nature of human memory. Indeed, human memory is one of the most tenacious and enigmatic problems ever faced by philosophers and psychologists. The discussion of memory dates back to the early Greeks when Plato and Aristotle originally likened it to a "wax tablet." In 1890, pioneer William James adopted the metaphorical framework and equated memory to a "house" to which thirty years later Sigmund Freud chimed that memory was closer to "rooms in a house." In 1968, Atkinson and Shrifren retained the metaphorical framework but referred to memory as "stores". The fact that the controversy surrounding human memory has been marked more by analogy than definition suggests, however, that memory is a far more complex phenomenon than has been uncovered thus far. I intend to spend the rest of my professional life researching the nature of human memory and solving the riddle posed yet cunningly dodged by generations of philosophers and psychologists.

When I first came to psychology, however, I wanted to be a clinical psychologist. Only upon enrolling in Dr. Helga Noice's Cognitive Psychology course, did I discover the excitement of doing research. The course required us to test our own autobiographical memory by conducting an experiment similar to the one run in 1986 by W. Wagenaar. Over the course of the term, I recorded events from my personal life on event cards and set them aside without reviewing them. After studying the effect serial position on the recollection of autobiographical memories, I hypothesized that events that, when I sat down at the end of term to recall those same events I had described on the event cards, that events that had occurred later in the term would be recalled with greater frequency than events that had occurred earlier. Although the experiment was of simple design and predictable results, I found the processes incredibly exciting. Autobiographical memory in particular fascinated me because I realized how crucial, yet fragile, memory is. Why was my memory of even ten weeks so imperfect? What factors contributed to that imperfection? Could such factors be controlled?

I had ignited my passion for experimental psychology. Suddenly, I had many pressing questions about memory that I wanted to research. Under the guidance of Dr. Noice, I continued to study human memory. I worked closely with Dr. Noice on several research experiments involving expert memory, specifically the memory of professional actors. Dr. Noice would select a scene from a play and then a professional actor would score it for beats, that is, go through the scene grouping sections of dialogue together according to the intent of the character. Some actors use this method to learn dialogue rather than rote memorization. After they were finished, I would type up the scene and the cued recall test. Next, I would moderate the experimental sessions by scoring the actor's cued recall for accuracy and then helping with the statistical analysis. My work culminated with my paper, "Teaching Students to Remember Complex Material Through the Use of Professional Actors' Learning Strategies." My paper accompanied a poster presentation at the Third Annual Tri-State Undergraduate Psychology Conference. In addition, I presented a related paper entitled "Type of Learning Strategy and Verbatim Retention of Complex Material" at the ILLOWA (Illinois-Iowa) Conference the following year. Again, I was involved in all aspects of the experiment, from typing the protocol and administering it to the subjects to analyzing the data and finally presenting my results.

The opportunity to perform this research was invaluable, particularly as I began taking independent research seminars in my senior year. For the seminars, I was required to write an extensive review of the literature and then design a research proposal on any topic of my choice. Although I had participated in all aspects of research previously, this was my first opportunity to select my own topic. I was immediately certain that I wanted to explore at human memory. But I spent a long time considering what aspect of memory I found most intriguing and possible to tackle within the confines of the research seminar. I had always been interested in the legal implications of memory, so I to investigate eyewitness memory.

In retrospect, my choice was also informed by my recollection about an experiment I had read about several years earlier. In the experiment, subjects read about Helen Keller. Later they were given a recall test. Still later they were given an additional test to determine the source of their knowledge about Helen Keller. The authors discovered that subjects could not determine the source of their knowledge, that is, they could not distinguish whether specific details of their knowledge about Helen Keller came from the information provided by the experimenters or if the details came from another source at an earlier time. Once their new knowledge about Helen Keller had been assimilated into their previous knowledge about Helen Keller, there was no way to separate the information according to the source it came from.

I wondered what the implications of that conclusion would be for eyewitnesses. I wondered if an eyewitness account could be corrupted by misleading post-event information. My research proposal was entitled "The Rate of Memory Trace Decay and its Effect on Eyewitness Accuracy." While I was not able to complete the experiment in its entirety, I was excited by the fact that I created a possible research protocol. Immediately, I knew I wanted to pursue the field of experimental psychology. My success in course work and my passion for research demonstrated to me that I had both the interest and ability to enter this challenging and rewording field.

I have dedicated my undergraduate years to preparing myself for graduate work in experimental psychology. Once receive my doctorate, I intend to pursue research on human memory while teaching psychology to undergraduates at a small, liberal arts college, similar to the one I attended. It was, after all, my undergraduate research experience that gave me the opportunity to come to psychology with an interest in counseling people, but to leave with a passion for investigating the nature of human thinking. Undergraduates at smaller liberal arts colleges are often left out of research, which makes my desire to provide such experiences that much stronger. In the years ahead, I look forward to teaching as well as continuing my research. In the company of such greats as Aristotle, James, and Freud, I endeavor to leave behind my own contribution on the nature of human memory.

## **Why Qualified? Essay Two**

"To be nobody but yourself--in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else--



means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting." When I first read this passage by E.E. Cummings, I realized I have been fighting the same battle my whole life. When choosing the direction for my future, I have often accepted jobs based on a compromise between my own dreams and what others thought my dreams should be. This, of course, has led to an unfulfilling career.

Looking back, I always knew that I wanted to work in public service; but I also knew my staunchly conservative father would not be pleased. To him, the government is too big, too intrusive and too wasteful. I see things differently. And yet, his approval means a lot to me and his opinion has certainly influenced my the direction of my career. But I have finally come to understand that I must pursue my own path. After careful deliberation, I am confident that public service is, without a doubt, the right career for me.

Ever since my childhood I have detected in myself a certain compassion and innate desire to help others. I was the kid that dragged in every stray cat or dog I came across--and I still do. When I was eight years old, I rescued a rat from my sister's psychology lab and brought her home. I even coaxed my father into taking Alice--I called her Alice--to the vet when she became ill. But aside from my humanitarian kindness to animals, as a child I learned first-hand about America's need to reform and improve medical care. I spent years of my childhood on crutches and in hospitals because of a tumor that hindered the growth of my leg. Without adequate health insurance and proper care, I might still be on crutches, but I was fortunate. Today, as a public servant, I still desire to help others who are not so fortunate. Providing health care to 44 million uninsured Americans, while keeping insurance affordable, is one of the most difficult challenges facing policymakers. I want to work in state or local government to resolve this health care crisis and ensure that the disadvantaged get the care they need and deserve.

In order to succeed in my endeavors toward public service, I now realize that a master's degree in public policy is essential. But when I graduated from college in 1990, I didn't know how to continue my education, only that I should. For a while, I considered such options as law school or international relations, but I always returned to my desire to impact public life. My career in public policy began as a legislative assistant at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a non-profit educational organization that couples voices from the state legislature and the private sector to work on salient policy issues. My enthusiasm for ALEC's mission was evident, as I quickly moved up from legislative assistant to the director of two task forces. As manager of ALEC's task force on federalism and its tax and fiscal policy task force, I explored these issues thoroughly, never quite satiating my appetite for more information and knowledge. I found my integral role in the legislative process to be the most valuable and worthwhile experience I've had in my career to date.

Following ALEC, I took a position as a junior lobbyist for the Automotive Parts and Accessories Association (APAA). As a lobbyist, I voiced the APAA's concern over regulatory and environmental issues affecting the automotive aftermarket. Although I was able to help small automotive parts manufacturers battle the "Big Three" automakers, I quickly realized that being an advocate for the automotive aftermarket was not my calling in life. I wanted to promote policies which had the potential to improve life for the greater public, for I could not see myself spending a lifetime working within an isolated industry.

With that frame of mind, I accepted employment as a policy analyst in the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) research department in Washington, D.C. Helping small business owners is a cause close to my heart. For nearly 30 years, my family has owned a barbecue restaurant in the Washington, D.C. area. I've worked in the business at several different times, since the age of 14. Because of my involvement in my family's business, I understand the unique problems facing small business owners. At the NFIB, I valued my contributions because I know small businesses have a huge economic impact on our country and they are unquestionably an important constituency. Nevertheless, I felt uncomfortable working for a special interest group--even for one I deeply cared about.

From my experiences at the APAA and the NFIB, I have learned how I want to shape my future. My goals

are now clear: I want to develop and advocate policy decisions that will benefit society as a whole, not just a few influential special interest groups. I want to uncover the objective truth of issues and tackle them in the best interests of the nation, not distort the facts for the benefit of a small group. I know I am able to look beyond partisan politics to solve problems for this country. Because of these unbending desires to reveal truth and to remain committed to fair and equal advancement for all citizens, I think of myself as an ideal candidate for public service.

Additionally, I consider my active interest in politics to aid my pursuit of a career in public policy. I've always found my interest in politics exceptional, ever since my college roommates used to tease me for faithfully watching C-SPAN. However, my faith in the political process began to wane as I witnessed sensible public policy proposals torn apart by partisan conflict. I saw advocacy groups distort facts, and provide extreme, over-blown examples, jeopardizing prudent policy decisions. I observed how powerful elected officials, ensnared in their own partisan rancor, would block fair and balanced legislation which offered the most practical solution for their constituents. But I also encountered many thoughtful and wise people who devote their lives to public service. These devoted individuals inspired me. Like them, I want to be actively involved in the design and delivery of essential government services that improve the lives of the citizens in our society today. I am positive that by avoiding partisanship and urging the private industry, the public sector and non-profit groups to collaborate, many difficult problems can be resolved.

In order to be an effective public servant, I recognize the indispensability of an advanced degree. I've gained a lot of "real world" experience, but I need more training in the fundamentals of economics and statistics, as well as direction in sharpening my analytical and quantitative skills. I also want to devote time to studying the ethical dimensions of policy decisions. In graduate school, I'll have the opportunity to truly understand and appreciate the competing interests surrounding so many complex issues like health care reform, environmental protection and economic policy.

I've chosen Duke's public policy program for several reasons. Duke's program stands out because there is an emphasis on quantitative and analytical skills, which are so critical to policy analysis. As I mentioned, I feel that if I can strengthen my ability to approach problems logically and systematically, I will have succeeded in sharpening skills I consider necessary to succeed in the public realm. And possibly even more importantly, Duke's program bridges the gap between abstract principles and reality. This interdisciplinary approach is essential for responding to today's policy problems. I am excited by the possibility of combining the MPP program with the Health Policy Certificate Program. I am particularly interested in studying the problem of reforming state health to reduce the number of uninsured, and I believe Duke's curriculum will offer me a chance to do just that. From my own research into Duke, I feel confident in my knowledge of the public policy program and its potential to teach me. And after meeting with Helen Ladd, the Director of Graduate Studies, I'm even more convinced that Duke's program is right for me.

On the road "to be nobody but" myself, I've encountered twists and turns, and some detours--it is unquestionably the hardest battle I could fight. However, in the process, I've accumulated a tremendous amount of valuable experience and knowledge. My diversity of experience is my biggest asset. Because I can relate a Duke education to concrete examples from my own past, it is the perfect time for me to join the public policy program. I know that my past can be used to prepare myself for the promises of the future. At Duke, I hope to synthesize the two and truly learn what it means to become myself.

## **Why Unique? Essay One**

Perhaps the most important influence that has shaped the person I am today is my upbringing in a traditional family-oriented Persian and Zoroastrian culture. My family has been an important source of support in all of the decisions I have made, and Zoroastrianism's three basic tenets--good words, good deeds, and good thoughts--have been my guiding principles in life. Not only do I try to do things for others, but I always push myself to be the best that I can be in all aspects of my life. I saw early the doors and

opportunities that a good education can open up; thus, I particularly tried hard to do well in school.

Another important experience that has had a large influence on me the past few years has been college. Going from high school to college was a significant change. College required a major overhaul of my time-management techniques as the number of things to do mushroomed. In high school, I was in the honors program, with the same cohort of students in all my classes. Thus, I was exposed little to people very different from myself. College, on the other hand, is full of diversity. I have people of all backgrounds and abilities in my classes, and I have been fortunate enough to meet quite a few of them. This experience has made me more tolerant of differences. Furthermore, a variety of classes such as the Humanities Core Course, in which we specifically studied differences in race, gender, and belief systems, have liberalized my world view.

My undergraduate research has occupied a large portion of my time in college. Along with this experience have come knowledge and skills that could never be gained in the classroom. I have gained a better appreciation for the medical discoverers and discoveries of the past and the years of frustration endured and satisfaction enjoyed by scientists. I have also learned to deal better with the disappointments and frustrations that result when things do not always go as one expects them to. My research experience was also important to me in that it broadened my view of the medical field. Research permitted me to meet a few medical doctors who have clinical practices and yet are able to conduct research at the university. This has made me seriously consider combining research with a clinical practice in my own career.

From my earliest memories, I can always remember being interested in meteorology. I believe that this interest sparked my love for the outdoors, while my interest in medicine molded my desire for healthy living. As a result of these two influences, I try to follow an active exercise routine taking place mostly in the outdoors. I enjoy running and mountain biking in the local hills and mountains, along with hiking and backpacking. All of these activities have made me concerned about the environment and my place in it.

## **Why Unique? Essay Two**

My longtime fascination with politics and international affairs is reflected in my participation, starting in high school, in activities such as student council, school board meetings, Vietnam war protests, the McCarthy campaign, and the grape boycott. As each new cause came along, I was always ready to go to Washington or the state capital to wave a sign or chant slogans. Although I look back on these activities today with some chagrin, I realize they did help me to develop, at an early age, a sense of concern for social and political issues and a genuine desire to play a role.

As an undergraduate, I was more interested in social than academic development. During my last two years, I became involved with drugs and alcohol and devoted little time to my studies, doing only as much as was necessary to maintain a B average. After graduation my drug use became progressively worse; without the motivation or ability to look for a career job, I worked for a time in a factory and then, for three years, as a cab driver in New York City.

In 1980 I finally "hit bottom" and became willing to accept help. I joined both Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, and for the next several years the primary business of my life was recovery. Although I had several "slips" in the beginning, I have now enjoyed nearly seven years of complete freedom from drug and alcohol use. I mention my bout with addiction because I think it is important in answering two issues that presumably will be of concern to the admissions committee: my lackluster undergraduate record and the fact that I have waited until the age of 34 to begin preparing academically for a career in public policy. It would be an oversimplification to call addiction the cause for either of these things; rather I would say it was the most obvious manifestation of an underlying immaturity that characterized my post adolescent years. More importantly, the discipline of recovery has had a significant impact on my overall emotional growth.



During the last years of my addiction I was completely oblivious to the world around me. Until 1983 I didn't even realize that there had been a revolution in Nicaragua or that one was going on in El Salvador. Then I rejoined the Quaker Meeting, in which I had been raised as a child, and quickly gravitated to its Peace and Social Order Committee. They were just then initiating a project to help refugees from Central America, and I joined enthusiastically in the work. I began reading about Central America and, later, teaching myself Spanish. I got to know refugees who were victims of poverty and oppression, became more grateful for my own economic and educational advantages, and developed a strong desire to give something back by working to provide opportunities to those who have not been so lucky.

In 1986 I went to Nicaragua to pick coffee for two weeks. This trip changed my whole outlook on both the United States and the underdeveloped world. The combination of living for two weeks amid poverty and engaging in long political discussions with my fellow coffee pickers, including several well-educated professionals who held views significantly to the left of mine, profoundly shook my world view. I came back humbled, aware of how little I knew about the world and eager to learn more. I began raiding the public library for everything I could find on the Third World and started subscribing to a wide variety of periodicals, from scholarly journals such as Foreign Affairs and Asian Survey to obscure newsletters such as Through Our Eyes (published by U.S. citizens living in Nicaragua).

Over the intervening two years, my interest has gradually focused on economics. I have come to realize that economic development (including equitable distribution of wealth) is the key to peace and social justice, both at home and in the Third World. I didn't study economics in college and have found it difficult to understand the economic issues that are at the heart of many policy decisions. At the same time, though, I am fascinated by the subject. Given my belief that basic economic needs are among the most fundamental of human rights, how can society best go about providing for them? Although I call myself an idealist, I'm convinced that true idealism must be pragmatic. I am not impressed, for example, by simplistic formulations that require people to be better than they are. As a Quaker I believe that the means are inseparable from the end; as an American I believe that democracy and freedom of expression are essential elements of a just society, though I'm not wedded to the idea that our version of democracy is the only legitimate one.

Although I have carved out a comfortable niche in my present job, with a responsible position and a good salary, I have become increasingly dissatisfied with the prospect of a career in business applications programming. More and more of my time and energy is now being absorbed by community activities. After getting my master's in public administration, I would like to work in the area of economic development in the Third World, particularly Latin America. The setting might be a private (possibly church-based) development agency, the UN, the OAS, one of the multilateral development banks, or a government agency. What I need from graduate school is the academic foundation for such a career. What I offer in return is a perspective that comes from significant involvement in policy issues at the grass roots level, where they originate and ultimately must be resolved.

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## Business School Admissions Essay Samples

### Why MBA? Essay

Turkish news nowadays carry vivid images which have become terrifyingly commonplace: the surface of the sea littered with dead sheep; a landfill explosion leading to a number of deaths; vendors offering radiation-contaminated tea for half-price; a little girl's death resulting from her fall through an open sewage manhole in her schoolyard; radioactive waste sold to unsuspecting scrap dealers; a twenty-year-old tanker breaking into pieces, spilling hundreds of tons of crude oil into the ocean and killing sea life all around.

The frequency with which these environmental disasters fill Turkish news broadcasts -- along with the obvious insensitivity of the authorities towards both environment and health issues -- prompted me to learn about ways to prevent these types of disasters. At the age of fifteen, I decided to focus my studies on environmental sciences in order to equip myself with the technical tools I would need to make a real contribution.

After earning a master's degree in environmental sciences, I completed a professional international management certificate program in order to gain a management perspective of the field. I then realized that, in order to effectively combine my technical knowledge and management skills, I needed to accumulate real-world experience. Specifically, working at a large company would allow me to develop insight into various industries, as well as an overarching vision of the international business arena.

I have now worked for nearly two years in the energy and environment group of Koc Holding, Turkey's first and biggest diversified conglomerate. As a project engineer, I am mainly responsible for our holding companies' environment and energy sector investments. This position has given me the opportunity to interact with businessmen from all over the world, thereby expanding my international perspective. Because of my outstanding work performance, I was chosen to attend various meetings with local and international governmental bodies such as OPIC, IFC, and the World Bank. It is highly unusual for a young associate to represent the company at such events, and my self-confidence -- as well as my management skills -- was further enhanced by that successful experience.

While working in various business lines, including the automotive industry, consumer durables, and the energy sector, I have realized that the root cause of many environmental problems is financial. I believe that many people in the environmental sector are so ignorant or insensitive that they will cheat customers to increase profits. Furthermore, businesses do not prioritize environmental investments; as a result, insufficient funds are allocated to adequately prevent problems. For instance, despite a population over eight million people, Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, still lacks a properly operating sewage system. In most of the areas of the city, waste water is discharged directly into the Bosphorus.

In the long term, I hope to help solve my country's problems by starting my own environmental-services business in Turkey. The company will serve both local and international customers by providing cost-effective, adaptable solutions ranging from waste management to safety management. In order to accomplish this goal, however, I must deepen my knowledge of the field. Despite my experience, I still lack some important knowledge and management skills, especially in finance, marketing, and entrepreneurship. I am also aware that my knowledge of American environmental issues is insufficient. Since dealing with aspects of international business will be an integral part of my job as an entrepreneur, it is essential that I fill in these gaps.

The NAME School's MBA program is the perfect bridge from where I am to where I want to be. I am

attracted by the inventiveness and uniqueness of its entrepreneurial and finance programs, and believe that I will increase my practical knowledge of entrepreneurship by interacting with my classmates. I value the fact that at NAME entrepreneurial education does not stop at the classroom, but rather continues through internships and extracurricular activities. I feel that a business school for entrepreneurs should balance a dose of theory with real-world application, and NAME's curriculum and hands-on experiences through associations, internships, and the management field study provide such balance.

I am also drawn to NAME because of the school's emphasis on teamwork and technology, reflected by such exciting courses and programs as High Technology Entrepreneurship, International Finance, 12-week field application projects, and the global immersion program directed to teach global thinking and global action. Additionally, the school's profusion of student groups and its flexible entrepreneurial program -- with electives from 200 courses -- will allow me to tailor my course of study directly to my career interests. It is precisely this flexibility that I plan to draw on while at NAME and beyond, by taking advantage of (and contributing to) the school's strong international alumni network.

Above all, a NAME MBA will help me strengthen both the finance knowledge and the entrepreneurial skills necessary to secure a position as an environmental specialist in a multinational American-based firm. Such a position, in turn, will prepare me to accomplish my long-term ambition of building my own company. By developing and maximizing the technical knowledge and managerial skills I have already accumulated, NAME will allow me to ultimately make a concrete and substantial contribution to Turkey's environment.

## **Uniqueness Essay**

For the first 20 years of my life, my activities--and self-confidence--were circumscribed by the fact that I was a chronic allergic asthmatic. I was underweight, not as strong or as well as my peers, and unable to participate normally in sports. At night I was unable to sleep without an inhaler beside my bed. I was forced to ingest heavy medication on a daily basis.

At the age of 20 I started running (slowly at first), because I discovered that this exercise--although routinely precipitating a mild asthma attack--would later enable me to sleep through the night. Very gradually, my runs became longer. My strength improved, the severity and frequency of my attacks lessened, and soon I was able to discontinue all medication. More remarkably, after about seven years I was actually able to run 20 miles with no problem at all. This accomplishment was an enormous confidence booster, as it demonstrated that a normal, healthy life was possible for me and that I could achieve anything if I set my mind to it.

Eventually it was a logical step for me to progress into competition. I found myself running in marathons and, finally, competing in triathlons. In 1983, in fact, I successfully competed in the Hawaii Ironman triathlon, arguably the most arduous and certainly the most celebrated single-day athletic endurance event.

I have assiduously pursued aerobic exercise for the past 11 years, ever since I discovered that such endeavors were finally possible for me and were the means by which I could attain physical strength and well-being. It was a long and arduous road--from huffing and puffing (and wheezing) my way through tentative one-mile runs to involving myself in the rigors of the triathlon--but I was determined to become fit and to stay fit.

It has made all the difference.

## **Qualifications Essay**

As a Marketing Manager with ADP's corporate marketing department, I have been assigned to lead various product-specific marketing initiatives supporting a diversified group of business segments. Among these tasks, none was more important to the strategic direction of the business than leading the development of ADP's web site [adp.com](http://adp.com).

ADP, a leading \$5 billion technology company with over 425,000 clients worldwide, lacked a consistent or aggressive Internet strategy. Instead, each business unit or division was driving its own website strategy and execution. More often than not, the result was a fragmented message: a cluttered, company-centric website that failed to effectively communicate our broad range of products and services. Despite its market leadership, ADP was meeting neither the expectations of users nor the needs of clients. The company was also missing a tremendous marketing opportunity and risking losing market share because our competition was operating at a far higher level than ours. Realizing that corporate marketing could add value across the company's business segments, I initiated and led a plan to redesign the website and fully leverage the Internet as a marketing channel to drive branding, product awareness, and sales leads through an integrated and path-driven website.

My role was specific: develop a strategy to improve navigation, communicate the complete range of ADP's products and services, optimize the flow of traffic to drive leads for the business segments, persuade visitors to purchase ADP products and services online, and create a platform for ADP's evolving E-business strategy. This initiative was highly challenging because of the complexity of the service offerings, the diversity of the business, and the overwhelming political bureaucracy within the organization.

With a limited budget, limited resources, and limited supervision, I designed a four-phase strategy to re-evaluate the current website and replace it with an active, path-driven site. The strategy included a review of the company's current navigation and content, a strategic assessment mapping navigation and functionality against corporate and divisional objectives, and the design and architecture of the site. Furthermore, we developed a plan to validate our recommendation with market feedback through client and prospective client focus group interviews.

The first phase encompassed an overall program review, analysis of all current ADP and industry Internet market research, a web traffic audit, and internal interviews with senior management. In familiarizing ourselves with current industry practices, we also reviewed ten competitors and twelve business-to-business leaders' websites. These 22 sites were carefully evaluated for their relative strengths and weaknesses in the areas of navigation, content, degree of user-centricity, and organization. The second phase included a design exploration. Working together with a web design firm, we developed five different design options. In phase three, we gathered market feedback through focus group interviews conducted with both clients and prospects based on the current web site and on the new design options. The final phase involved feedback-based revisions to the designs, which will be presented to ADP's Executive Committee in April and launched in May 2000.

The project was a success. Our recommendation was received with exceedingly positive feedback by both the business units and the Executive Vice President of Marketing. In addition, I have been awarded with the honor of presenting the project to the Executive Committee in April. Our long-term goal is to develop an entire adp.com team dedicated to servicing clients and marketing on the Internet.

The management skills I have gained from this project have been invaluable to my career growth. I have learned the value of qualitative and quantitative research, experience in fiscal management and project management, and the importance of matching corporate strategy to Internet strategy. More importantly, the experience has taught me the value of gathering senior management "buy in" through the progression of a project. I was able to successfully gain the support of senior management by maintaining open communication and making them part of the process. Ultimately, this support was critical to the success of the project, which has brought my department and me increased visibility within the company -- a development that, in turn, has led to more important projects. Through the success of adp.com, I am now regarded as an effective and respected manager who has the ability to analyze and lead complex projects from concept to completion while gaining the support of senior management.

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## Law School Statement Samples

### Why Law? Essay

My interest in the law began with donuts. As a child, I developed early persuasive skills during family disagreements on how to divide boxes of the treats. My parents belonged to the "biggest people deserve the most donuts" school of thought; while as the youngest family member, I was a devout believer in the "one person, one donut" principle. The debates were often cutthroat, but when it came to donut distribution, I sought justice at any cost.

As my family grew older and more health-conscious, we stopped eating donuts, and for many years I forgot our childhood debates. However, some recent life decisions have brought to mind those early explorations of justice. When I first arrived at the American International School of Rotterdam, I quickly learned that my colleagues were a diverse and talented group of people. Unsure of how to establish my own place among them, I tried phrases that had always worked to impress college friends. "When I work for the UN . . .," I told the second-grade teacher, and she answered with an erudite discussion of the problems she faced as a consultant for that organization. I told the kindergarten teacher, "When I'm in law school . . .," only to hear about his own experiences in law school. By the time I discovered that even many grade-school students were better travelled than I, I learned to keep my mouth shut!

Living alone in a new country, removed from familiar personal and cultural clues to my identity and faced with these extraordinary co-workers, I started to feel meaningless. How, I wondered, could I possibly make a difference in a place as vast as our planet? To my own surprise, I found that answer at church. Although I was raised in the Bahá'í Faith, I have only recently understood the essential place that religion plays in my identity. Bahá'í social beliefs include the need to work against extreme poverty, nationalism, and prejudice; and I now realize that I cannot hold those beliefs without doing something about them. My identity rests on these convictions; I cannot see the need for help and just move on. I have to help; it's who I am.

The lessons I've learned from my international colleagues have channeled my desire for service into the field of international development. I still wish to fight the "'Biggest Get the Most' Theory of Donut Distribution," but now on an international scale.

### Uniqueness Essay

Once in a while I am approached by past research associates who heard that I "got out," as several of them put it, and who want to know how I handled the switch. Some of them have no idea that people with science backgrounds have options other than research and teaching, and many are discouraged by the thought that they would have to leave their beloved science in order to engage in those activities. Several of them have called me from home to ask these questions, for fear of being overheard at the laboratory.

The first thing I tell them is that there is far more to science than the "bench." I myself entered the science field as an undergraduate, when I chose to study veterinary microbial genetics. I worked in the laboratory of Dr. William Sicho, an epidemiologist who specialized in number-crunching but who needed technical assistance with field sampling and laboratory work to generate the data. Dr. Sicho instilled in me a strong desire to learn about and experiment in genetics. I was fascinated by the many ways genetics can be used to help understand how or why certain biological functions occur, and I wondered how I could use my knowledge of genetics to benefit society.

After I obtained my bachelor of science degree, I went on to graduate school earning a master of science degree part-time while working full-time jobs in a couple of well-established research institutions. I enjoyed both graduate school and working in the laboratory. I also learned the "correct" career path—an academic position at a respectable research university—was what we were supposed to want out of life. More specifically, academic laboratories were acceptable, but working in industry, even to do research, was generally looked upon as "selling out." I believe this attitude has relaxed somewhat since then, since grants and jobs have become harder to secure and tenured positions lack the security they once possessed.

It was during my graduate studies that I began to question my goals and the assumptions they were based on. I was becoming increasingly unhappy with the direction my career was heading, and I began to question my abilities and motivation. Finally, when I heard myself mutter out loud "I don't want to do bench work forever," I sat up and took notice. I decided that in spite of my training, and even though I still loved science, research was not right for me.

I wanted a career, or at least a job for starters, that valued my graduate degree and training, and that was a better fit for my skills and future ambitions. I decided I would do best with a job that was externally driven either by deadlines or by the needs of others; in addition, I wanted to talk, write, and/or evaluate science as a whole rather than focus on one particular aspect of a research project.

As a molecular geneticist, I had occasionally interacted with the patent department at SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals in support of my supervisor's patent applications. They worked on a variety of intellectual property issues in a number of scientific disciplines that were of interest to the company. I realized then that I could make very good use of my science background as a patent attorney.

Earlier this year, I accepted an offer to work as a patent agent in the Corporate Intellectual Properties Department at SmithKline Beecham. The job involves writing and prosecuting patent applications, which in turn requires broad knowledge of both science and law. I soon realized that, in order to become an effective patent practitioner, I must become intimately acquainted with U.S. patent law. Because SmithKline Beecham is an international corporation, I have also learned a great deal about international patent law so that I can assist in foreign prosecution of SmithKline Beecham's patents. When I first started the job, it occurred to me that my learning curve was a cliff with an overhang, and I was at the bottom looking up.

I was extremely lucky to find a job almost immediately following graduation last January. However, this opportunity was not trouble-free; there were additional risks to consider at the time I made the decision to change. Our company was in the middle of negotiations to merge with another international pharmaceutical company, GlaxoWellcome Pharmaceuticals. As details of the merger were released, we were informed that the majority of the money saved in the merger was going to be invested back into research and discovery. In other words, because of the patent applications that I draft and prosecute, my job as a patent agent will play an essential role in the inventive process in the new company. Daily interaction with inventors keeps me up-to-date with cutting-edge technology in the biotechnology field. As my work progressed, I knew I had made the right decision, and I have never looked back.

In October, I took the complex patent bar examination. My determination to take the examination straight away was derived from my desire to become a registered patent agent before entering law school, so that my academic studies will not suffer while I attempt to balance a career and my education. I am now hoping to complete the career transition over the next four years by attending law school at Villanova University and becoming a patent attorney. A few weeks ago, I was offered the opportunity to move to our new research facility in North Carolina, but declined the offer in hopes of attending Villanova's law program, which is well respected among the various pharmaceutical companies on the East Coast for its intellectual property education.

Intellectual property is a crucial asset to our company, and I take generating and protecting these assets very seriously. A considerable part of my job involves "translating" science for attorneys and patent law for scientists. I also have to be able to understand a new result quickly enough to grasp what the specific invention is and ask further questions which allow me to distill the invention down to its bare essence. Organization is also key-this is something I learned as a matter of self-preservation, since this is a deadline-driven, and sometimes crisis-driven, job.

I now believe that my job as a patent agent is not a break with the past; rather, it is an exciting, alternative continuation of my career as a scientist. The patent applications that I draft and prosecute make me a critical part of the inventive process at SmithKline Beecham. Furthermore, my interactions with inventors on a daily basis keep me up to date with the latest technology. Not so long ago, when I began research as an undergraduate, I wondered what impact I would have on the development of new scientific knowledge. Through my work as a patent agent, I know that I am a key participant in the promotion of scientific progress.

I still run into acquaintances from my research days who ask me why I "left science." I am quick to set them straight. I may not get my hands wet, but I use far more of my education and training than I ever did at the bench, and I am very much still in science. I firmly believe my experiences in science and patent prosecution will allow me to be a creative and contributing member of Villanova University, both as a student and as a future attorney representing achievement.



## Sample Medical School Essays

### Why Medicine? Essay

My earliest impression of medicine occurred when my mother repeatedly required the assistance of physicians in dealing with her chronic migraine headaches. Her doctors were always there for her, day or night. The respect that my parents bestowed on doctors, and the doctors' ability to ease suffering, sparked a desire to one day become a physician myself. This was an ambitious goal for someone coming from a family in which no one had obtained a professional degree. However, my traditional family-oriented culture, emphasizing doing good for others, contributed to this decision to pursue a career in the medical field. Furthermore, the American individualistic spirit gave me the confidence and opportunity to undertake a challenging medical career.

I also had the chance to gain some firsthand experience in the medical profession when I volunteered for over a year in the emergency room of a regional hospital. From my volunteer experience, I learned the importance of organization and effective communication skills, and I was exposed to the diversity that exists in my community. It has also demonstrated to me why the American health-care system is the best in the world; I saw some knowledgeable minds using some very sophisticated equipment. But I also saw many ways it can be improved. For example, uninsured homeless and immigrant people would often come in, complaining of problems they had been having for a long time. Although we would treat these people as best we could, a health-care system that intervenes in such sicknesses earlier would have minimized costs associated with treating diseases in their later stages.

As a doctor, I hope to participate in these changes in order to benefit more people than are currently being served. Doctors should be able to serve people of all different races, ages, backgrounds, and cultures. I intend to use my skills and unique experiences to achieve this vision of what I think a doctor should be.

### Uniqueness Essay

Martial arts and medicine. They seem worlds apart, but they both have played significant roles in my life and for reasons that are surprisingly similar. They both offer challenge, require great discipline, and necessitate a goal-oriented approach.

I first became involved with the martial arts when I was only 13 years old. At that time I began studying karate in my hometown in northern California. Even then I was a goal-oriented individual who was attracted to the step-by-step progression involved in studying karate. Within a year I had earned a brown belt (the next-to-highest ranking) and was actually serving as an instructor at the karate academy where I had learned the sport. Dedication, discipline, and physical and mental prowess were behind my success, which included being the youngest person in the area to attain the brown belt.

In college I became involved in Tae Kwon Do, the Korean counterpart of karate. This sport, too, requires patience, determination, and a clear mind in addition to physical strength, endurance, and agility. Within a year I had become president of my university's 80-member Tae Kwon Do club, which ranks among the top sports clubs on campus. In assuming this position I began to have the opportunity to test myself as a leader as well as an athlete.

One of the reasons I became interested in medicine is that it, too, requires a meticulous, goal-oriented approach that is very demanding. Of course, it also happens that the substance of the profession holds

strong appeal for me, both in terms of the science and the potential for serving others who are in need.

Most of my exposure to the profession has occurred within the areas of surgery and emergency medicine. After first serving as an emergency medicine volunteer technician at a northern California hospital (where I had a moving experience with a young girl's death), I acquired the EMT-1A/CPR certifications and then worked as an Emergency Medical Technician-1A during a subsequent summer. This job was a fascinating, educational, and high-pressure experience that exposed me to the realities of medicine as practiced in crisis situations.

My extensive involvement with cardio thoracic surgery research over the last three years, first as a volunteer technician and currently as a staff research technician, has further fueled my desire to become a physician. I have had to rely upon my own ingenuity and problem solving skills as well as what I have learned in the classroom, and this has been exciting. One of the more unusual aspects of my work has involved me directly in the procedure of heterotopic heart transplantation in rats. This precise and technically demanding procedure encompasses microsurgery and usually is conducted only by residents. In fact, I am the only undergraduate student doing this procedure, which has shown me the extent of both my manual dexterity and capacity for learning sophisticated techniques.

I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to participate and contribute in almost every way during experiments, from administering anesthesia and performing extensive surgical preparations to analyzing the data obtained and operating monitoring and recording equipment, ventilators, and the heart-lung machine.

I am a somewhat shy individual, but I have found that within the medical environment my shyness evaporates. The opportunity to help others one-on-one is so rewarding and comfortable for me that I feel very much at ease, regardless of with whom I am working. I think one of the particularly attractive aspects of medicine for me, especially within such specialties as internal medicine and obstetrics/gynecology, is the potential for forming close, lasting, meaningful relationships with a wide array of patients.

For me, medicine emerges as the perfect avenue for indulging my impulses to contribute, to be involved with science, and to establish important links with others at both critical and noncritical moments in their lives.

## Scholarship Essay Samples

This section contains two sample scholarship essays:

### Scholarship Essay One

CRABIEL SCHOLARSHIP WINNER - won \$3,000 scholarship

Like Mr. Crabiel, I literally work tirelessly in many academic and leadership roles. I sleep no more than six hours a night because of my desire to expertly meet my many commitments. Throughout my life, I have worked as long and as hard as I possibly can to effect beneficial changes in both school and society.

During the summer of tenth grade, I took a number theory course at Johns Hopkins University with students from Alaska, California, and Bogota, Colombia. Similarly, during the summer following eleventh grade, I was one of ninety students from New Jersey selected to attend the Governor's School in the Sciences at Drew University. At Drew, I took courses in molecular orbital theory, special relativity, cognitive psychology, and I participated in an astrophysics research project. For my independent research project, I used a telescope to find the angular velocity of Pluto. With the angular velocity determined, I used Einstein's field equations and Kepler's laws to place an upper bound on the magnitude of the cosmological constant, which describes the curvature of space and the rate of the universe's expansion.

In addition to learning science, I recently lectured physics classes on special relativity at the request of my physics teacher. After lecturing one class for 45 minutes, one student bought many books on both general and special relativity to read during his study hall. Inspiring other students to search for knowledge kindles my own quest to understand the world and the people around me.

As president of the National Honor Society, I tutor students with difficulties in various subject areas. In addition, I am ranked number one in my class with an SAT score of 1580 and SATII scores of 750 in math, 760 in writing, and 800 in physics. In school, I take the hardest possible courses including every AP course offered at the high school. I am the leading member of the Math Team, the Academic Team, and the Model Congress Team. In the area of leadership, I have recently received the Rotary Youth Leadership Award from a local rotary club, have been asked to attend the National Youth Leadership Forum on Law and the Constitution in Washington D.C., and wrote the winning essay on patriotism for South Plainfield's VFW chapter. Currently enrolled in Spanish 6, I am a member of both the Spanish Club and the Spanish Honor Society. In addition, I recently was named a National Merit Scholar.

Besides involvement in academic and leadership positions, I am active in athletics. For instance, I lift weights regularly. In addition, I am the captain of my school's varsity tennis team. So far this year, my individual record on the team is 3-0.

Working vigorously upon being elected Student Council President, I have begun a biweekly publication of student council activities and opinions. Also, the executive board under my direction has opened the school store for the first time in nearly a decade. With paint and wood, we turned a janitor's closet into a fantastic store. I also direct many fund raisers and charity drives. For instance, I recently organized a charity drive that netted about \$1,500 for the family of Alicia Lehman, a local girl who received a heart transplant.

As Student Liaison to the South Plainfield Board of Education, I am working to introduce more advanced-placement courses, more reading of philosophy, and more math and science electives into the curriculum. At curriculum committee meetings, I have been effective in making Board members aware of the need for these courses. In addition, my speeches at public Board meetings often draw widespread support, which further helps to advance my plans for enhancing the curriculum.

I have also been effective as a Sunday school teacher. By helping elementary school students formulate principles and morals, I make a difference in their lives every week. The value system that I hope to instill in them will last them their entire lives. I find teaching first-graders about Christ extremely rewarding.

Clearly, I have devoted my life both to working to better myself and to improving civilization as a whole. Throughout the rest of my life, I hope to continue in this same manner of unselfish work. Just as freeholder Crabiell dedicates his life to public service, I commit my life to helping others and to advancing society's level of understanding.

## Scholarship Essay Two

### WINNING NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLAR ESSAY

Nothing in all the world is comparable to reading Ayn Rand beneath New York's skyline or to studying Nietzsche atop a mountain summit.

Since childhood, the studies of philosophy and science have interested me profoundly. Having read many books on relativity, quantum mechanics, existentialism, religion, capitalism, democracy and post-Aristotelian philosophy, my quest for knowledge has only intensified. Certainly, the purpose of my life is to discover a greater understanding of the universe and its people. Specifically, I plan to better grasp the interrelationship among forces, matter, space, and time. In addition, I hope to find a unified field theory and a convincing explanation for the birth of the universe.

During the summer of tenth grade, I took a number theory course at Johns Hopkins University with students from Alaska, California, and Bogota, Colombia. My attendance of the New Jersey Governor's School in the Sciences is another accomplishment that exemplifies my dedication to knowledge. During the summer following eleventh grade, I took courses in molecular orbital theory, special relativity, cognitive psychology, and I participated in an astrophysics research project. For my independent research project, I used a telescope to find the angular velocity of Pluto. With the angular velocity determined, I used Einstein's field equations and Kepler's laws to place an upper bound on the magnitude of the cosmological constant, which describes the curvature of space and the rate of the universe's expansion.

In addition to learning science, I recently lectured physics classes on special relativity at the request of my physics teacher. After lecturing one class for 45 minutes, one student bought many books on both general and special relativity to read during his study hall. Inspiring other students to search for knowledge kindles my own quest to understand the world and the people around me.

Also, as president of the National Honor Society, I tutor students with difficulties in various subject areas. Moreover, I am ranked number one in my class, and I am the leading member of the Math Team, the Academic Team, and the Model Congress Team. In the area of leadership, I have recently received the Rotary Youth Leadership Award from a local rotary club and have been asked to attend the National Youth Leadership Forum on Law and the Constitution in Washington D.C. Currently enrolled in Spanish 6, I am a member of both the Spanish Club and the Spanish Honor Society.

As student council president, I have begun a biweekly publication of student council activities and

opinions. Also, the executive board under my direction has opened the school store for the first time in nearly a decade and is finding speakers to speak at a series of colloquia on topics ranging from physics to politics. Directing fund raisers and charity drives also consumes much of my time. For instance, I recently organized a charity drive that netted about \$1,500 for the family of a local girl in need of a heart transplant.

Consistent with my love of freedom and my belief in democracy, which is best summarized by Hayek's Road to Serfdom, I have recently initiated an application to become the liaison to the local board of education. Also, in keeping with my belief that individuals develop strong principles and ideology, I teach Sunday school three months a year and have chaperoned for a local Christian school.

Outside pure academics and leadership roles, I lift weights five times a week for an hour each day. In addition, I play singles for my school's varsity tennis team. Because I find extraordinary satisfaction in nature and have dedicated my life to its understanding, I enjoy mountain climbing. Among the notable peaks I have reached are Mt. Washington, Mt Jefferson, Mt. Madison, Mt. Marcy and Mt. Katahdin. Unquestionably, my life's aim is to dramatically raise the height of the mountain of knowledge so that my successors may have a more accurate view of the universe around them.

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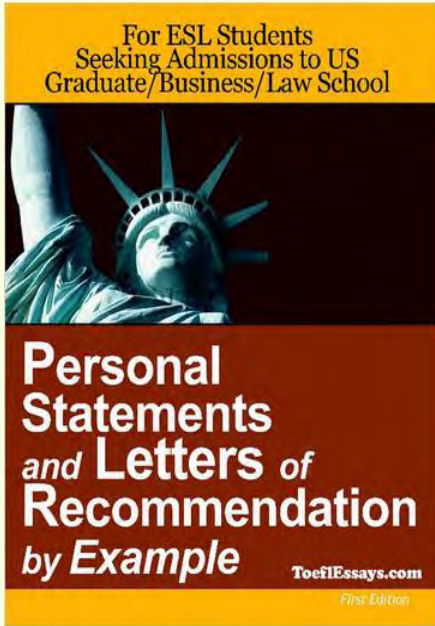
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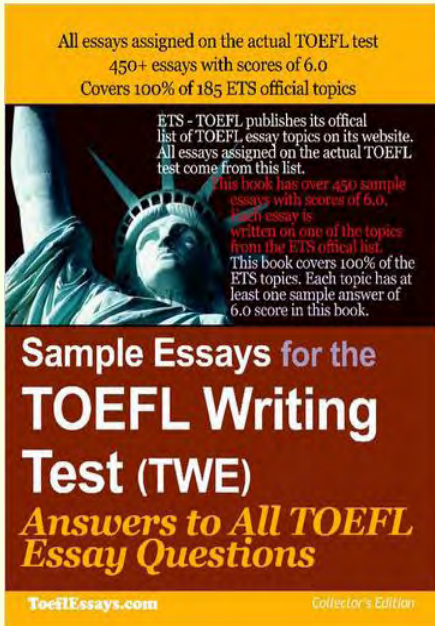
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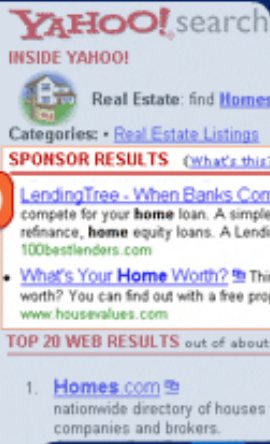
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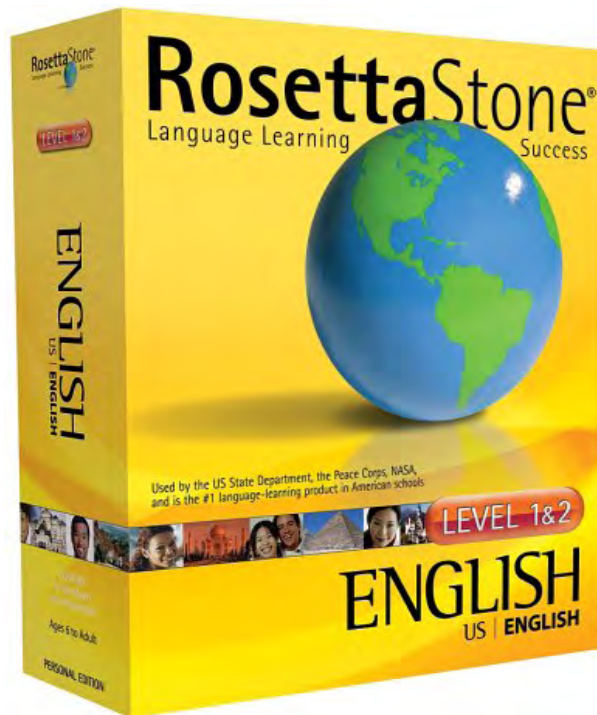


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