



Essay Rubric

A rubric is a tool that experts - often professors and teachers - use to communicate expectations, provide focused feedback, and grade writings and presentations. At ACC, we have developed this rubric to ensure our Essay Resource Team provides consistent and helpful feedback to our students.

When our Team reviews each draft of a Personal Statement or College Essay, they assess:

- Topic
- Opening Hook
- Organization
- Values and Personal Characteristics
- Desired College Traits
- Word Choice
- Sentence Structure
- Concluding Paragraph
- Mechanics
- Emotional Appeal.

| Assessment Area | Excellent | Very Good/ Good | Fair | Needs Work |
|-----------------|---|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Topic | Presents topic in an original, creative and engaging manner | Presents topic in an interesting manner but needs more originality and creativity | Ideas are too general or cliché | Ideas are vague or unclear |

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| Opening Hook | Very strong, draws the reader in and is highly relevant to the topic | Strong, provokes reader interest | Not adequately relevant or strong | Lacks Opening Hook |
| Organization: Clear, Focused, Logical and Effective | Strongly Organized | Well organized, but needs additional work on clarity, focus, logic and/or effectiveness | Some organization | Lacking organization |
| Values and Personal Characteristics | Strongly shown and expressed | Adequately shown and expressed | Needs to be better shown and expressed | Absent |
| Traits: Drive/Grit; Intellectual Curiosity; Initiative; Diversity of Experience; Community | At least one trait expressly stated, linked to Values and clearly tied to topic | At least one trait expressly stated and adequately tied to topic | Traits are implied but not expressed | No implied or expressed traits |
| Word Choice | Sophisticated word choice, proper word use, no jargon or cliches | Good word choice, proper word use, and little jargon and cliches | Word choice and word use are basic; some jargon and cliches | Elementary word choice and word use; overuse of jargon and cliches |

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|---|---|--|--|---|
| Sentence Structure: Use of Simple; Compound; Complex; and Compound-Complex Sentences | Sentence structure is highly varied to enhance flow and rhythm of essay | Sentence structure is adequately varied; sentences mostly flow | Sentence structure is limited; sentences need to flow more | No sense of sentence structure or flow |
| Conclusory Paragraph | Very strong, ties all thematic points together | Strong, ties most thematic points together | Needs work tying thematic points together | Needs coherent conclusory paragraph |
| Mechanics | No errors | Few errors | Several errors | Numerous errors |
| Emotional Appeal | Essay creates a powerful and memorable response in readers | Essay creates a strong response in readers | Some emotional appeal | Lacks necessary level of emotional appeal |

Our goal is for each student's final Personal Statement or Essay to have a Good/Very Good Rating in each Assessment Area. This may require as few as one or as many as four rewrites.