

# Essays: Common Grammar Mistakes, Typical Types, and Structure



# Essays: 8 Common Grammar Mistakes (1-3)

- *According to University of Albany, there are ten mistakes students and adults make when writing essays.*
- **1. Inconsistent tense (I am guilty of this one):** You need to be either in present tense and past tense. The tense you choose must be used throughout for the most part (unless you are doing a flashback). Do not use two tenses interchangeably.
- **Example:** Incorrect: Pam decides to go to bed, but then she drank too much coffee and could not fall asleep. She watches television for half an hour, then she finally felt sleepy.
- Correct: Pam decided to go to bed, but then she drank too much coffee and could not fall asleep. She watched television for half an hour, then she finally felt sleepy.
- **2. Spell Check:** Please use the spell check on the computer. COLLAGE does not want you to make a mistake. If you have to handwrite the paper in class, try to keep the language simple and use your best judgment on spelling.
- **3. Quoting instead of paraphrasing:** Generally, you should only quote when you are trying to provide the overall tone of the topic or book.

# Essays: 8 Common Grammar Mistakes (4-5)

- **4. Plot summaries instead of analysis:** Even though you may have to summarize part of a plot to convey a point, it should not be the main focus on your paper. You need to demonstrate that you have some intellectual thought about the topic(s). This is part of analysis what was read.
- **Example:** Incorrect: Ted placed the money he earned tutoring kids in Math which was meant for his vacation. He held the earnings tightly as a tear of joy ran down his face.
- Correct: Ted's tear of joy that ran down his face due to earnings from tutoring kids in Math has enable him to go on vacation.
- **5. Incomplete Sentences:** The correct sentence structure is a subject and verb for each sentence.
- **Example:** Incorrect: You okay? Correct: Are you okay?

# Essays: 8 Common Grammar Mistakes (6-8)

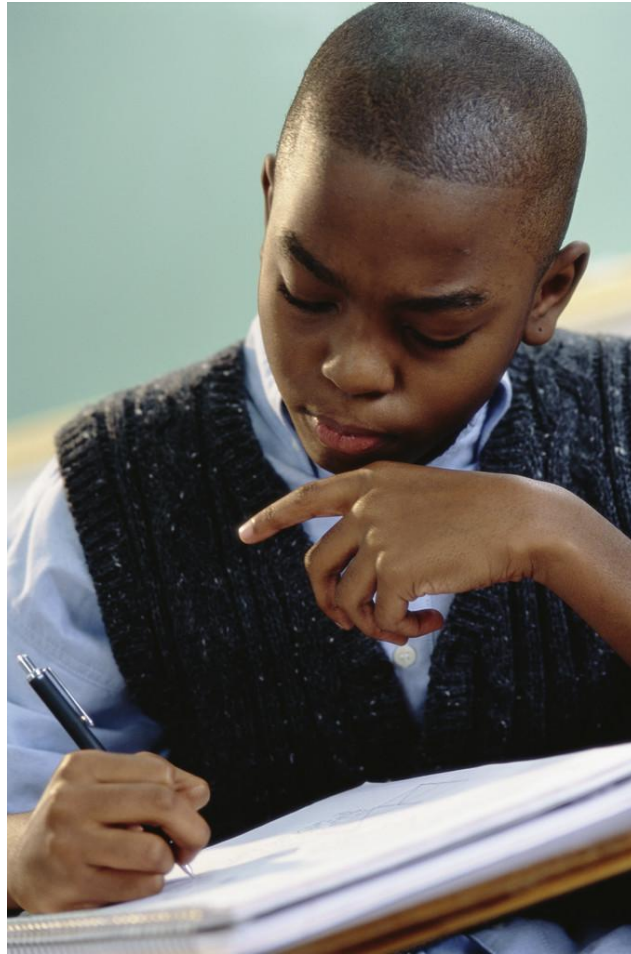
- **6. Single Spacing and Indenting:** You must single space and indent quotes from the rest of a text when more than one sentence is involved. You do not need quotation marks when done this way (you do need quotation marks with just one sentence).
- **7. Second Person ( I break this rule too):** Avoid using the pronoun *you* but use the acceptable *one*. (*When to use each pronoun?*).

**Example: Incorrect** : If you do not know how to work the problem , you need to ask.

**Correct:** If one do not know how to work the problem , one needs to ask.

**8. Contractions ( I am at fault with this one):** Avoid using don't, won't, didn't, etc. Use do not, will not, did not instead.

# 4 Essay Types for College Applications



# #1 The Personal Statement

- This is the typical essay one will write. It comes in the form of “ Tell us about yourself” , “ What is one experience that defines you?”, or “Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.” (Last one is from the Common Application- the one we will fill out).
- The point of this essay is to find out personal details about the real you (not just the GPA, ACT/SAT score, extracurricular activities, etc.). The system wants to discover what life experiences shaped you (negatively or positively). (Provide an example for both).
- This statement is the most dominate type for admissions. Remember, they are searching for a way to picture you ( Explain?).

# #1 Personal Statement Structure

- **1. Central Event -** The central event is the one experience that really shaped you the most (Example: My mother's brain tumor). It does not have to be something positive or negative, but it must show some significant role in your life. This central event should not be covered in the rest of your application. Remember, this essay is to provide ADDITIONAL Information about you.
- **2. Write About Almost Anything:** You can write about anything with a few exceptions. One could talk about an adversity they have overcome such as Asthma, Financial Debt, Loss of Sibling, etc. Avoid topics that can be offensive such as RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES(depends on the school) and POLITICAL EVENTS(rallies or causes).
- **3. Try to make it Unique:** If possible, one should focus on something that would stand out. Your goal here is to impress the committee who reads thousands to ten of thousands of applications.

# #2 Your Favorite Activity

- **Your Favorite Activity:** This type of essay wants the writer to express their main interest in school or the writer's community. The main intent is for the writer to show the admission committee commitment to something . It can also be outside hobbies and jobs (I would avoid using these if possible unless they are unique).
- **Examples:** Good: Knowledge Bowl, Science Competition, Charity Cause, Discussion of your Collection of World War II Memorabilia, etc.
- Bad: Religious gatherings (depends on school), Playing Video Games, Political Beliefs (can hurt you), etc.
- **Be Unique:** Remember, One should strive for uniqueness in the essay. They read ten of thousands of essays, so the usual activities are often bland to them.



# #2 Your Favorite Activity Structure

- **Ask yourself questions:** What are my top interests? What do you do most in your free time (no offence stuff)? Are they useful activities? What excites you the most (Appropriately for other audience?)?
- **Write like you are trying to persuade someone how interesting and exciting the activity is:** This is the approach you should use. Make the activity seem like a pivotal moment in your life.
- **Be professional and creative:** Maintain a professional manner in the essay, but one needs to be somewhat creative with your essay. The essay should show dedication to this activity and how it has been fun for you. Make sure it flows between both professionalism and creativity.

# #3 Why [insert school name]?

- **Why?:** With this prompt, you are being asked to explain why you want to spend four years at their college or university. This writing prompt has two purposes.
- **First purpose:** It shows your desire to attend their institution. Colleges want to maintain a high matriculation rate.
- **Second purpose:** This essay type shows the college that the student matches their institution's culture or needed demographic.
- **Importance of essay:** This is the second most popular essay type for college admissions.
- **Note:** Try to avoid negative language in this essay. Example: This college may not be my first choice, but I consider University of XG to be a good runner up (people do say dumb things like this- believe me).
- **This is the more conservative essay (not political):** This essay tends to be more focus in its approach.

# #3 Why [insert school name]?

## Structure

- **Three ways to approach this essay:**
- **Picture the admissions officers see you:** Are you a future teacher who play the guitar? Are you a math major with a theater background? These type of pictures or type cast of you makes the admissions officer decide whether or not to admit you (both are fine). Their main goal here is to see who the individual applying in specific terms.
- **Do research on the specific department you are interested in:** If possible, talk to the department head and write about that what she/he said in your essay.
- **Do research on clubs and organizations:** Same principle as the previous one. Talk to each leader of the clubs and organizations you are interested in.
- **Purpose for the three ways:** The reason to tackle this prompt in this style is to convey interest in attending even if it is on top or bottom of your list.

# #4 Intellectual Curiosity

- **Academic Freedom:** Schools desire to see what you learn in your free time. Stanford has this type of essay in their admissions : ***Reflect on an idea or experience that has been important to your intellectual development.*** This college prompt wants the student to demonstrate stages of development in your intellect during an idea or experience.
- **An essay such as this is classified as more liberal in its approach (not political):** The essay in this style has more option in its approach. It is a blend between the Personal Statement and Favorite Activity.

# #4 Intellectual Curiosity Structure

- **Ask some questions to yourself:** What are my favorite subjects in school? What are your least favorite subjects in school? What are some subjects or skills I wished I could have learned in high school?
- **Big point:** Just like previous essays, You need to show a difference between the application information and the essay. Colleges want to see personal development.
- **Read aloud:** No joke. The applicant needs to read his or her essay out loud not to themselves. They must check to see if tone is positive and not negative.
- **Have someone proofread:** You need to find someone to proofread your essay ( I need to on my power points). Sometimes, other individuals can find mistakes we cannot.
- **Main focus:** The pivotal moment in this style of essay is demonstrate again personal growth and show external influences that shape who you are.

# The Common College Application: Five Essays

- There are five essays on the common application:

- Go to :

<https://appsupport.commonapp.org/link/portal/33011/33013/Article/1694/What-are-the-2015-16-Common-Application-Essay-Prompts>

# The Common College Application: Finish Essays

