

OUTLINE

Conquering the College Admissions Essay in 10 Easy Steps

By Alan Gelb

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As professional writer, a father college bound students and a college essay coach, the author offers a concise and practical guide to the essentials in writing the college essay in a fast reading 193 page book.

Naturally focused on writing to the college essay target audience, the writing tips are nevertheless helpful for any writing purpose as well.

- I. Introduction
 - A. Rules of the Game – p. 2
 1. Rule one- “Students have to have complete ownership over their essays.”
 2. Rule two- “You have to work (hard) at the process.” You learn to be your own editor.
 - B. The Importance of the Essay- p.4
- II. Chapter/Step One- Understanding the Narrative P.7
 - a. Making Choices-“ be ruthless about what works and what doesn’t”
 - b. A Narrative is... (Tell a story)
 - c. What a Narrative needs.
 - i. “The Once”
 - ii. “The ordinary vs. the extraordinary
 - iii. “Tension and Conflict”
 - iv. “The Point”
 - d. Conflict is... “the struggle between opposing forces”
 - e. Making a story
- III. Chapter/Step Two- Finding Your Topic p.25
 - a. Getting started
 - b. Asking Questions
- IV. Chapter/Step Three- Point of View p.39
 - a. Person
 - b. Tense
 - c. Other Tense Choices
 - d. Number
- V. Chapter/Step Four- Getting it Down p.53
 - a. Whoever said it was easy.
 - b. Freewriting
 - c. P.S. An Idea
 - d. Those 500 words
 1. Fear of Failure
 2. A lot is at stake
 3. It’s tough stuff
 - e. The morning after: Congratulate yourself, Suspend judgement, get other readings, hold nothing sacred
- VI. Chapter/Step Five- “Big Picture” Editing p.66
 - a. Common Errors-Concept, Presentation, Structure, Tone,
 - b. Once more with feeling
 - c. Draft to Draft – ‘writing is about going from draft to draft until you get it right.’”
 - d. Working through the First Draft- Identifying the conflict and digging deeper
 - e. What’s the Point?

VII. Chapter/Step Six-Second Draft p.83

- a. Structure and Flow
- b. Radical Surgery
- c. Bad Beginnings
- d. Egregious Endings
- e. Playing with Time

VIII. Chapter/Step Seven- Self-Editing p.98

- a. Edit Thyself
- b. Metaphors- keep it simple and common mistakes
- c. Proportion and rhythm
- d. Tone
- e. Authentic Voice- formality and informality

IX. Chapter/Step Eight- T

X. Third Draft p.112

- a. Keep it clean
- b. Adverb abuse
- c. The human voice
- d. Don't waste time
- e. Find strong verbs
- f. Question your adjectives
- g. Lost and Found- losing your way and untangling sentences
- h. Vague reference
- i. Put some pace on it
- j. Don't quote me on this

XI. Chapter/Step Nine- Pulling it Together p.130

- a. Reviews: six tips on how to make the most of sought out reviews
- b. Polishing- 8 pages of common mistakes to watch for
- c. Jargon

XII. Chapter/Step Ten- Finishing up p.148 Author shows examples of the hard labor that goes into getting it right.

Also discusses:

- a. Issues not to worry about
- b. Gender sensitivity
- c. Proofreading

XIII. Appendix p.162 - Real sample student essays, some referred to in book, are presented.