

# 8 Steps for Writing an Admissions Essay



## Reread your writing prompt, and note the necessary components.

Guarantee that you do what is asked in the prompt: Make a list of all components you must include, reference or answer alongside the requirements for the piece overall. Is there a length requirement or mandatory layout setting? Don't miss easy points by not following directions.

For instance, for the [William & Mary Online MBA](#), students should submit essays that are around 800 words in length, roughly three double-spaced typed pages. Submitting anything less may mean your essays simply won't be read. Respect your readers' time by turning in a polished essay that fulfills the requirements.

## Brainstorm potential anecdotes or topics to include.

Now that you've reviewed what was asked of you, take some time to jot down your initial thoughts. What immediately comes to mind when you read the prompt?

Then ask yourself: Are your thoughts the most fitting or supportive for your subject? Do they "sell" you as a professional and potential graduate student? Make sure each subject, each sentence even, has a distinct purpose in your paper and a strong selling point for you as a prospective student overall.

## Write an outline of your paper.

Once you feel confident in your idea, outline what you intend to include in your essay. While this can be as thorough or brief as you'd like it to be, crafting a paragraph-by-paragraph or section-by-section outline helps to organize your thoughts cohesively, ensuring you tell your story in a way your reader can understand and helping you stay on track by preventing rambling. Keep all included parts relevant and on track, so it fulfills your intended messaging.

## □ Compose the rough draft.

Start to fill in your outlined paragraphs with your initial thoughts. Don't stress about the phrasing too much now though—you can spruce up your tone and diction as you edit later on. The hardest part of writing can often be simply starting it. Make it a little easier on yourself by lowering the stakes in your mind for your first draft.

## □ Sleep on it and then edit with a fresh perspective.

Often, when it comes to writing and editing, we can overlook simple mistakes in our own writing, because we already know what we had intended to say and misread it when skimming the page. For this reason, it can be very beneficial to put your first draft to the side for a day or two and then return to it with fresh eyes the following day. Then go ahead and give it a read-through, marking it up as you go.

### **Be sure to look out for these common concerns in first drafts:**

- Run-on sentences or comma splices
- Rambling or irrelevant inclusions
- Overly colloquial language (like "get" or "got" and other everyday idioms)
- Not fulfilling your prompt or answering the question fully
- A clear main idea but no supporting details
- A robotic or impersonal tone, rather than a strong personal voice
- Not demonstrating skills applicable to your program (remember your bottom line here!)

Keep in mind that universities often invoke a similar business mindset when considering students for admissions—do you demonstrate a high potential return on investment (ROI) for your school?

## □ Time to revise your writing.

Now, begin revising your essay and making any envisioned revisions. Be sure to note any concerns you have about your writing as you make edits, so you can remember to ask a friend or peer about it later on.

Though you may not be a professional writer, you should still be able to communicate your thoughts clearly, conveying why you want to earn such a degree, how you intend to use it in your career, and what makes you an ideal candidate for the program. Just be sure to support your answers with clear and relevant details.

At times, it can help you improve your phrasing and streamline a more complicated thought by pretending you are explaining the matter to a friend in a conversation, rather than in a formal writing assignment that can affect your future.

## Proofread your piece, and send it to a trusted friend, Admissions Advisor or colleague.

Now that you've revised your first draft and may be feeling a little better about the whole process, you should set time aside to proofread your piece personally and, more importantly, find a trusted person in your life to send your essay to as well. Make sure it's a friend you trust to give you honest advice and critique your writing rather than simply complimenting you.

If you can, consider sending it to two or three friends or colleagues, all of whom are at varying levels in their academic and professional careers, so you receive unique feedback from each person.

If you have been in touch with an **Admissions Advisor with the university**, consider reaching out to them as well to see if they can provide any additional suggestions to your work. Never hesitate to get a second opinion, since writing can be quite subjective.

Reading your essay aloud to yourself can also be an expert way of catching easily overlooked mistakes and of noticing when something sounds less natural or more stuffy in tone.

## Make your final edits, proofread once more, and then turn it in!

After you've collected feedback, take some time to review their suggestions and then implement them. You will want to be sure you spend an equal amount of time rereading your essay after revising it to ensure there are no new typos or grammatical issues. If you can, you might send it back to your trusted friend-turned-editor for a final proofread.

Once you have incorporated all of the feedback and ensured everything is grammatically sound, submit your essay (usually in an email to your advisor or through the admissions online portal), **secure any other applications items**, and then start counting down to the beginning of the semester!



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