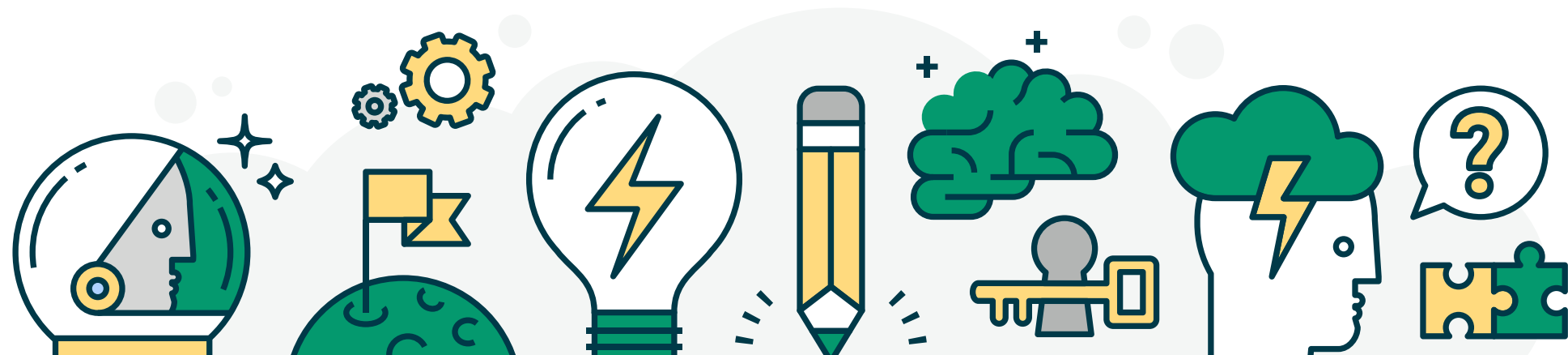


ADMISSIONS 101:

TIPS FOR WRITING THE BEST GRAD SCHOOL ESSAY



Research indicates that **individuals holding a master's degree can earn as much as 24 percent more per month** than someone with only a bachelor's degree.¹

With stats like this, the decision to pursue an advanced degree becomes a fairly easy one. But once you've made the decision to apply for a master's program, it's time to tackle the more challenging part: getting accepted.

The admissions process can be stressful, even for the most capable and confident applicants. Specifically, many students struggle with how to write a graduate school essay or personal statement. It can be difficult to write about yourself, especially with the pressure of knowing that your work is going to be competing against that of other qualified candidates. Have you been dreading this part of the process?

Take a breath and know that there's nothing to be worried about.

Following are some simple but effective tips to help you write a great graduate school essay that will help you stand out from the pack.

GET FOCUSED

Read the prompt. Read it again. And again.

Now one more time. No, really! The most important thing you can do is make sure that you understand what you're being asked to write. Make a list of everything the prompt asks of you, and check it twice. Be respectful of your readers' time by making sure you fulfill all the criteria of the prompt. Once you're sure you have a handle on what you'll be writing, it's time to get creative.

GET PERSONAL

What comes to mind when you read the prompt?

Remember that your essay should reflect you: the way you think, what interests you, what excites you. Can you think of any good anecdotes pertinent to the prompt? A saying that holds personal meaning for you? Jot down your ideas. It may seem insignificant, but tying the prompt back to your personal experience is a great way to make sure you stand out.

GET ORGANIZED

Take a look at the ideas you generated. Can you find any through lines?

What ties it all back to the prompt? Now you can start working on an outline. As you go, don't forget to keep referring back to the prompt. Make sure that you're staying on topic and avoid rambling.

Imagine you're the Admissions Advisor reading your essay. Are you drawn in? Or imagine that your personal statement is a movie: does it have an inviting beginning? A compelling middle? A rousing conclusion?

GET TO WORK

Now get down to it.

Take your outline and start fleshing it out, paragraph by paragraph. Don't worry too much about the craft of your essay just yet. Focus on getting your ideas down on paper. You can worry about polishing your word choice later, but for now, compose your ideas as clearly and completely as possible.

GET SOME REST

That's right. Once you're done with the first draft, take a step away.

Sleep on it, and come back with a fresh perspective a day or two later.

GET INTO THE NITTY GRITTY

Read your essay like you're reading it for the first time, but with a red pen in hand.

Look out for some of these common concerns:

- Rambling, run-on sentences
- Unclear language
- Poor word choice. Using big words may be impressive, but only if you use them correctly. Ask yourself: am I stating this as clearly as I can?
- Failure to fulfill the prompt
- Impersonal voice—does it sound like you? Or does it sound like a robot?
- Overly colloquial language. Think of this as a letter to a business acquaintance, not a friendly text message
- Keep in mind that your program is looking at you as an investment. Do you seem like someone who will provide a good ROI?

GET POLISHED

Once you've gone through your personal statement with a fine-toothed comb, it's time to revise.

Rewrite parts that aren't working, and make sure to keep track of your changes. If you aren't sure about something, make a choice and go with it. Remember that you'll show this to a trusted friend or colleague before you submit it to your program, so keep track of any questions you might have.

GET FEEDBACK

Do not skip this step. Send your revised draft to a few trusted friends or colleagues.

Ask them any questions you might have, and be open to the feedback you may receive. Remember that feedback is totally subjective, so send it to people from different professions and walks of life. It's always valuable to have multiple insights, but be careful: sending it to too many people might be overwhelming. Only share your work with readers you trust.

GET FINISHED

Using the insights of your friends and colleagues, give your essay a final proofread and polish.

This is the time to be extra careful about grammar, punctuation and misspellings. It can be difficult, but read your final draft slowly and carefully. Make sure every comma is in the right place and every sentence ends with a period.

GET IN IT

It's time to submit your essay.

Hit that "Submit" button and relax with the confidence of a person who's done everything they can to ensure their success. Breathe easy, and start counting down the days until your first term begins.

1. Retrieved on January 31, 2018, from pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/28/for-millennials-a-bachelors-degree-continues-to-pay-off-but-a-masters-earns-even-more/