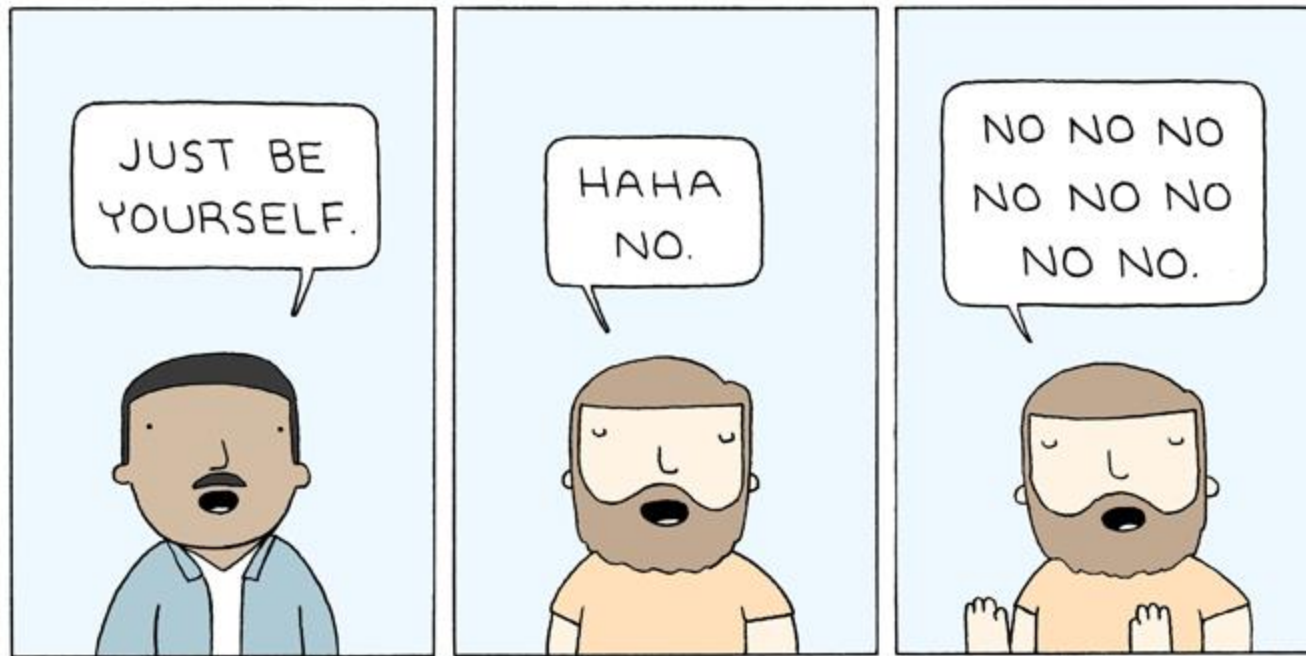


WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT



THE COMMON APP: LET'S TALK NUMBERS

1. **More than 750 schools accept the Common App** (as of the end of the 2017-2018 enrollment period)
2. **Of those 750 schools, over 450 REQUIRE a college personal statement**
3. **From those 450, 372 REQUIRE supplemental questions**

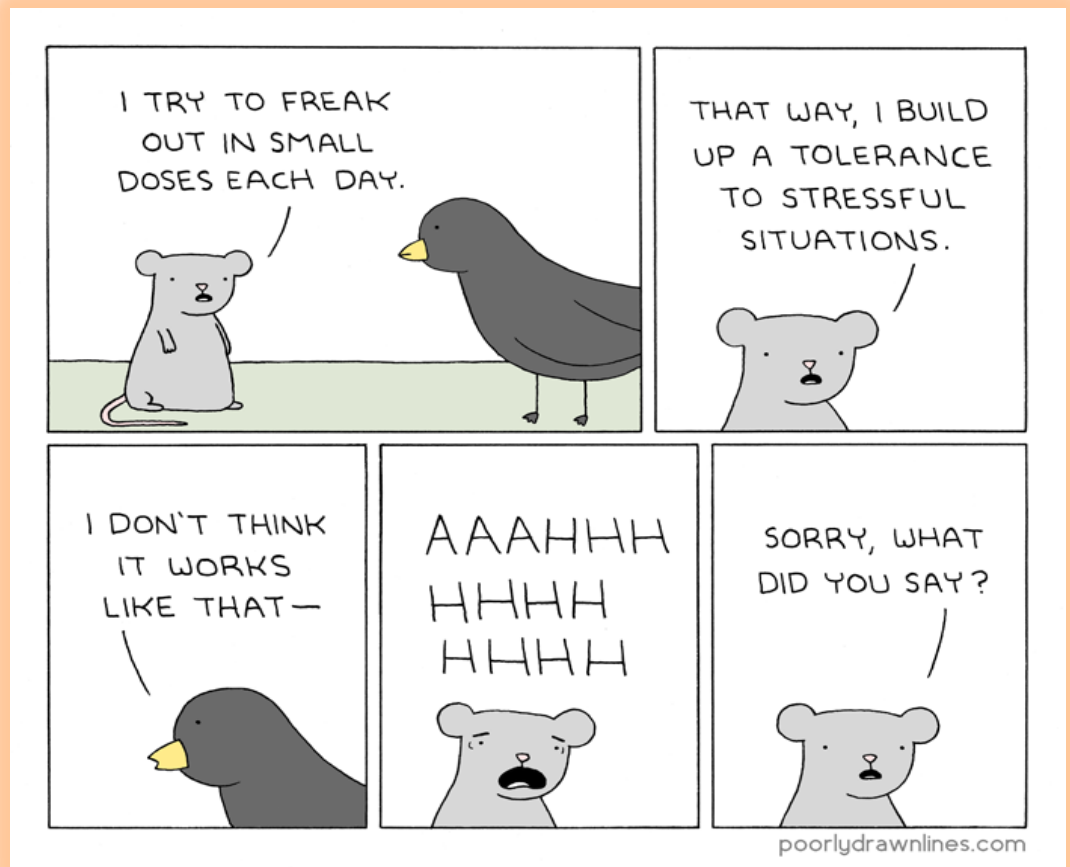
Source: CollegeData.com; commonapp.org

**WHAT IS THE AVERAGE %
OF TIME AN ADMISSION OFFICER
SPENDS ON THE ESSAY PORTION OF
YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION?**

33%

**That's about 60-80 essays a day; 10-
20 minutes per essay. - *NPR***

FIRST THINGS FIRST: PANIC.



MAYBE NOT EXACTLY...

- **ACTIVITY TIME KIDDOS!!**
 - Refer to the handout being passed out.
 - Choose a section and complete it:
 - Academics
 - Activites
 - Life-Events
 - Let's discuss it: How does this fit into the Common App?

2018-2019 COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

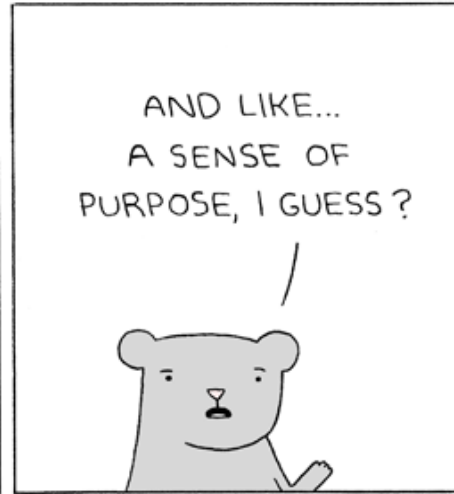
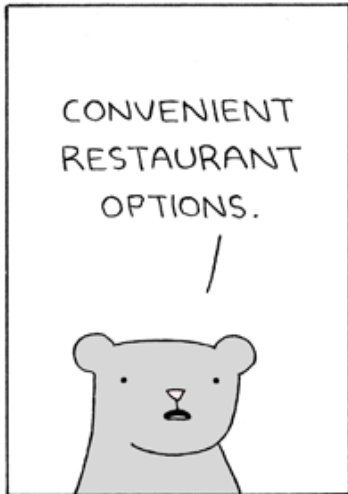
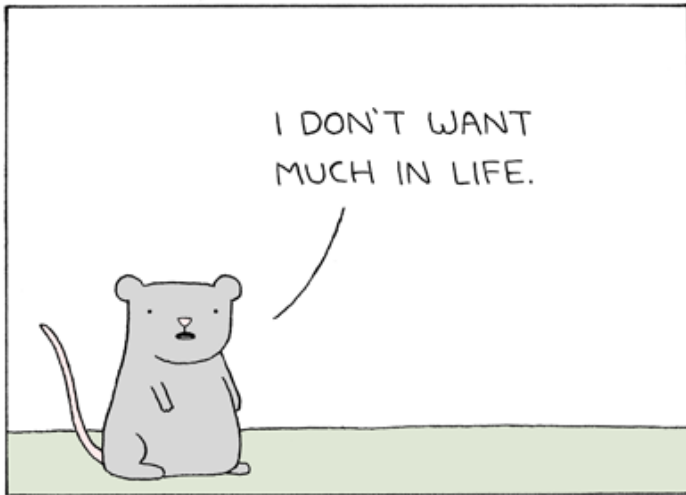
LOOK AT THE QUESTION: TWICE

You:

1. How are you interpreting the question?
2. What do you see as the most important words/ ideas?
3. Can you answer it honestly?

College:

1. How does this question relate to what you know about the school?
2. What is the school trying to target here?
3. Can it be answered based on your chosen program?



poorlydrawnlines.com

**NOW
WHAT?
WRITE.**

YES

PLEASE

- GIVE THE READER A REASON TO KEEP READING
- KEEP IT PERSONAL
- PROVE IT BY BEING SPECIFIC
- KNOW YOUR SUBJECT...
 - don't get caught talking about the wrong school...

ANSWER THE QUESTION

- Many students try to turn a 650-word essay into a complete autobiography; not surprisingly, they fail to answer the question
- *Make sure that every sentence in your essay exists solely to answer the question*
- After you are done writing, ask yourself:

Is every single sentence
crucial to the essay?

CONCLUDE EFFECTIVELY

- The conclusion is the **last chance** to persuade or impress admission officers
- Make it interesting for a long lasting impression

Avoid summarizing!!

**JUST
DON'T**

- DON'T TELL THEM WHAT YOU THINK THEY WANT TO HEAR
- DON'T USE CLICHÉS
- DON'T USE A QUOTE FOR QUOTE'S SAKE
- DON'T WRITE A RESUME
- DON'T TELL THE STORY OF YOUR LIFE

DON'T “THESAURUS-IZE” YOUR ESSAY...

- Do use your own voice
- Admission officers can tell Roget from a high school student
- Big words, especially when misused, detract from the essay and makes the essay sound contrived
- Powerful ideas are often best expressed in simple and elegant prose

Remember: Good writers use the best words, not the biggest words.

DON'T BE CYNICAL OR CONDESCENDING

- Don't use sweeping generalizations
- Don't try to set the world on fire with your rage
- Don't forget that your opinion is only your opinion and not everyone needs to hear it
- Don't be offensive

**If you think it's offensive,
it probably is.**

Done?
Lol no.

EDIT IT.



- Figure out which words you use as crutches. Do you say “unique” five times? Comb through your sentences to find highly used words and change things up.
- “I believe.” “I think.” “I feel that.” “I hope.” We know you do, as you are the writer of this statement. Write with confidence and conviction. Use the active voice, not passive.
- Read your personal statement slowly out loud. Fix places where you stall.
- Check spelling and grammar. Check spelling and grammar. Check spelling and grammar. Check spelling and grammar.

- Put the draft away for a week. Don't look at it, don't think about it.
- Read your draft after a week away. Remove or change the bits that feel not quite right now that you've had some time away from your writing.
- Check spelling and grammar. Check spelling and grammar. Check spelling and grammar. Check spelling and grammar.
- Ask someone to take another look at your draft. Identify a place that you feel doesn't quite “work still” and get specific feedback on that part of your statement.
- Rinse and repeat.

KEEP IN MIND...

Typical Personal Statement



80% Who are you?

20% What are your goals?

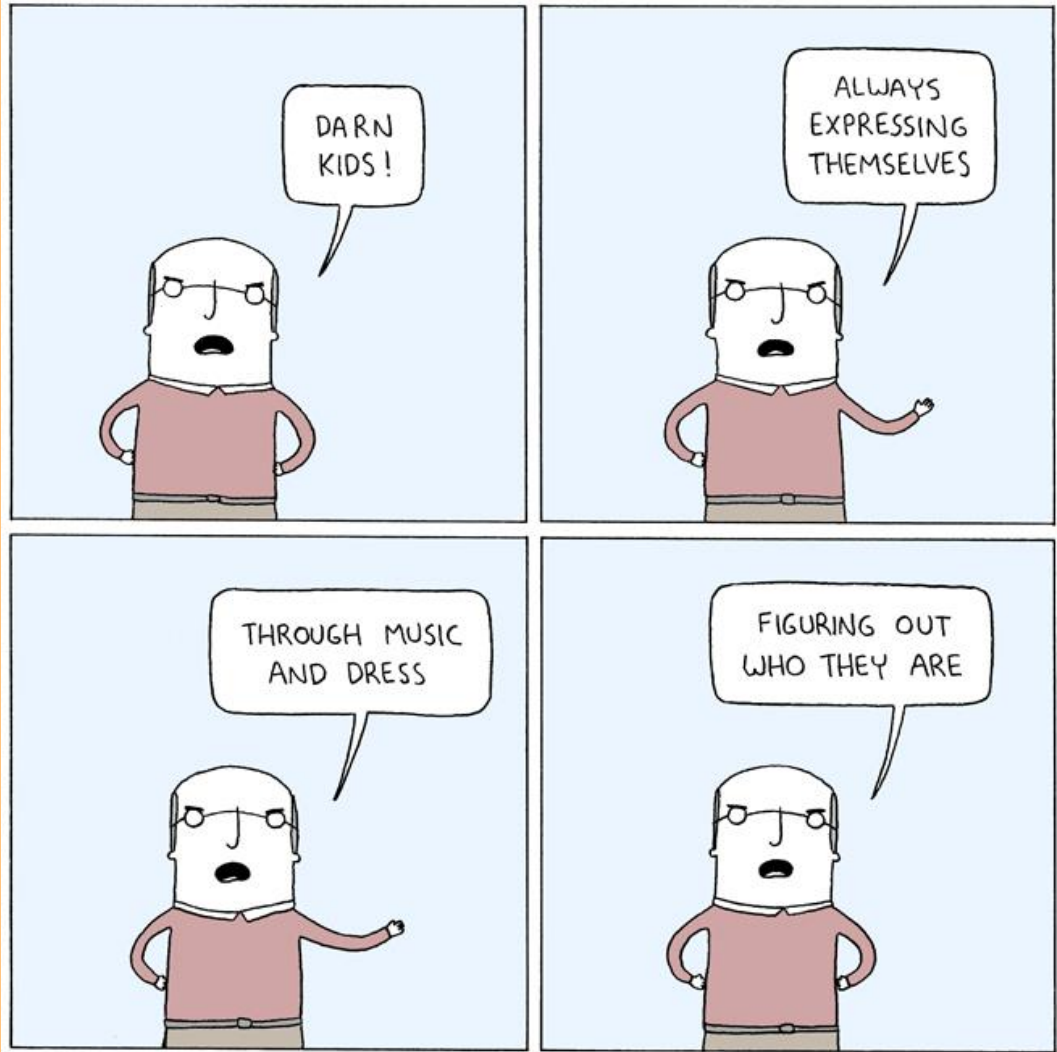
Prose is architecture, not interior decoration.

–Ernest Hemingway

Not a wasted word. – Hunter S. Thompson

Pity the readers. – Kurt Vonnegut

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is ... the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning. – Mark Twain



EXAMPLES

RESOURCES



- College Board gives great tips about writing a college essay. It also offers critiques of sample essays.
 - www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/essay-skills/index.html

- Purdue Owl
 - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/>

- Moraine Valley Community College Speaking and Writing Center:
 - <https://www.morainevalley.edu/student-success/academic-help/speaking-and-writing-center/>

- Grammarly
 - <https://app.grammarly.com/>

- YOUR TEACHERS. YOUR PARENTS. OTHER HUMANS.