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Personal statement examples for colleges

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rudimentary picture book about a friendly neighbor who went to the moon. But things progressed. My stories became more complex. I wrote a series of science fiction novellas. I tried my hand at poetry. I was amazed at the worlds I could create with the tip of my pen. I had dreams of becoming an author. Then somewhere along the way my family got a subscription to Netflix, and that completely changed the way I thought about storytelling. My nose had been buried in books up until then, so I hadn't really seen a lot of new movies. That quickly changed. It seemed like every other day a pair of new DVDs would arrive in the mail (this was the early days of Netflix). Dark Knight, The Truman Show, Inception, Memento — all these great films were coming in and out of the house. And I couldn't get enough of them. Movies brought stories to life in a way that books could not. I was head over heels for visual storytelling. Suddenly I wasn't writing novels and short stories anymore. I was writing scripts for movies. Now I wanted to transfer my ideas to the big screen, rather than the pages of a book. But I was still doing the same thing I had always done. I was writing, just in a different format. To help with this process, I read the screenplays of my favorite films and paid attention to the way they were crafted. I kept watching more and more movies. And I hadn't forgotten about my first love, either. I still cherished books and looked to them for inspiration. By the end of my junior year of high school, I had completed two scripts for short films. So why am I telling you all this? Because I want to turn my love of storytelling into a career. I'm not totally sure how to do that yet, but I know I have options. Whether it's film production, creative writing, or even journalism, I want to find a major that suits my ambitions. Writing has taken me a long way, and I know it can take me even further. As I step into this next chapter of my life, I couldn't be more excited to see how my craft develops. In the meantime, I should probably get rid of that dusty old GameCube. Feedback from admissions professional Bill JackEssays don't always have to reveal details about the student's intended career path, but one thing I like about this essay is that it gives the reader a sense of the why. Why do they want to pursue storytelling. It also shows the reader that they are open to how they pursue their interest. Being open to exploration is such a vital part of college, so it's also showing the reader that they likely will be open to new things in college. And, it's always fun to learn a little bit more about the student's family, especially if the reader can learn about how the students interacts with their family. Example #2Prompt 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?"I remember my first impression of Irvine: weird. It was foggy, stock-full of greenery and eucalyptus trees, and reminded me of my 5th grade trip to a "science camp" which was located in the San Bernardino mountains. Besides Irvine, that was one of the few places in Southern California where you'd find so many non-palm trees. Of course, perhaps my initial impression of Irvine was biased, motivated by a desire to stay in my hometown and a fear of the unknown. While that was true to an extent, Irvine was certainly still a little peculiar. The city itself was based on a "master plan" of sorts, with the location of each of its schools, parks, shops, and arguably its trees having been logically "picked" before the foundation was poured. Even the homes all looked roughly the same, with their beige, stucco walls almost serving as a hallmark of the city itself.Thus, this perfectly structured, perfectly safe city seemed like a paradise of sorts to many outsiders, my parents included. I was a little more hesitant to welcome this. As I saw it, this was a phony city - believing that its uniformity stood for a lack of personality. My hometown, although not as flawlessly safe nor clean as Irvine, was where most of my dearest memories had occurred. From the many sleepovers at Cindie's house, to trying to avoid my school's own version of the "infamous" cheese touch, to the many laughs shared with friends and family, I shed a tear at the prospect of leaving my home.Moving into the foreign city, remnants of the hostility I held towards Irvine remained. Still dwelling in my memories of the past, I was initially unable to see Irvine as a "home." So, as I walked into my first-ever Irvine class, being greeted by many kind, yet unfamiliar faces around me, I was unable to recognize that some of those new faces would later become some of my dearest friends. Such negative feelings about the city were further reinforced by newer, harder classes, and more complicated homework. Sitting in the discomfort of this unfamiliar environment, it started to seem that "change" was something not only inevitable, but insurmountable.As the years went on, however, this idea seemed to fade. I got used to my classes and bike racing through Irvine neighborhoods with my friends, watching the trees that once seemed just a "weird" green blob soon transform into one of my favorite parts of the city. While I kept my old, beloved memories stored, I made space for new ones. From carefully making our way over the narrow creek path next to our school, to the laughs we shared during chemistry class, my new memories made with friends seemed to transform a city I once disliked into one I would miss. Through this transformation, I have come to recognize that change, although sometimes intimidating at first, can open the door to great times and meaningful connections. Although Irvine may have once seemed like a strange, "phony" place that I couldn't wait to be rid of, the memories and laughs I had grown to share there were very real. As I move onto this next part of my life, I hope I can use this knowledge that I have gained from my time in Irvine to make the most of what's to come. Even if the change may be frightening at first, I have learned to embrace what's on the other side, whether green or not.Feedback from admissions professional Bill JackOne huge plus to writing an essay that focuses on a place is that you might have it read by someone who has been there. Yet, what's really helpful about this essay is that even if someone hasn't been there, a picture is painted about what the place is like. Admission officers have the hard task of really understanding what the student sees, so the use of adjectives and imagery can really help. It's also really clever to see that the green that's mentioned at the beginning is mentioned at the end. It's a nice way to bookend the essay and tie it all together.Example #3Prompt 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?"I like getting lost." Not literally, of course, but figuratively. Whether it be in the story of a love song by Taylor Swift, or in the memories brought back by listening to my favorite childhood video game's background music, I've always appreciated music's ability to transport me to another place, another time, another feeling. Alas, I cannot sing, nor have I practiced an instrument since my middle school piano class days. So, perhaps Kurt Vonnegut was right. As he puts it, "Virtually every writer I know would rather be a musician." While I cannot speak for others, I have certainly not debunked his theory. Writing allows many, including myself, to attempt to mimic the transformative power of music - even if our singing voices aren't exactly "pleasant." Just as you can get lost in music, you can do so in a story. Whether it is in George Orwell's totalitarian Oceania, or Little Women's Orchard House, the stories outlined in novels can provide an amazing look into the lives and worlds of others, and an escape from the worries and problems of those in your own.While I am certainly not claiming to have the storytelling abilities of the Orwells or Alcotts before me, I've had fun trying to recreate such transformative feelings for others. When I was nine, I attempted to write a story about a little girl who had gotten lost in the woods, only managing to get a couple pages through. As I got older, whenever I was assigned a creative writing assignment in school, I wrote about the same pig, Phil. He was always angry: in my 8th grade science class, Phil was mad at some humans who had harbored his friend captive, and in my 9th grade English class, at a couple who robbed him. Thus, when I heard about a writing club being opened at my school in 11th grade, I knew I had to join. I wanted to discern whether writing was just a hobby I picked up now and then, or a true passion. If it was a passion, I wanted to learn as much as possible about how I could improve. Although my high school's writing club certainly wasn't going to transform me into Shakespeare, I knew I could learn a lot from it - and I did. The club challenged me to do many things, from writing on the spot, to writing poetry, to even writing about myself, something that's hopefully coming in handy right now. From then on, I started to expand into different types of writing, storing short ideas, skits, and more in appropriately-labeled Google Drive folders. At around the same time, I became interested in classic literature, which largely stemmed from a project in English class. We had been required to choose and read a classic on our own, then present it to the class in an interesting way. While my book was certainly interesting and unique in its own right, nearly everyone else's novels seemed more captivating to me. So, I took it upon myself to read as many classics as I could the following summer.One of the books I read during the summer, funnily enough, was Animal Farm, which starred angry pigs, reminiscent of Phil. I had also started going over different ideas in my head, thinking about how I could translate them into words using the new skills I learned. While the writing club helped reaffirm my interest in writing and allowed me to develop new skills, my newfound affinity for classics gave me inspiration to write. Now, I am actually considering writing as part of my future. In this endeavor, I hope that Phil, and the music I inevitably listen to as I write, will accompany me every step of the way.Feedback from admissions professional Bill JackAdmission officers might read 70 (or more!) essays in one day. It's not uncommon for them to start to blend together and sound similar. This essay might not make you laugh out loud. But, it might make the reader chuckle while reading it thanks to the subtle humor and levity. Being able to incorporate a little humor into your essay (if it is natural for you to do... do not force it!), can really be a great way to shed additional light into who you are. Remember, the essay isn't merely about proving that you can write, but it should also reveal a little bit about your personality.Example #4Prompt 5: "Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others."I learned a lot of things during the summer I worked at Tropical Smoothie. I discovered the value of hard work. I figured out how to save money. I even mastered the art of the Mango Magic smoothie (the secret is lots of sugar). But most importantly, I learned the power of perspective. And I have Deja to thank for that. Deja was my shift supervisor, and one of Tropical Smoothie's best employees. She was punctual, friendly, and always willing to lend a helping hand. She knew the store from top to bottom, and could handle pretty much any situation thrown her way. She made everyone around her better. On top of all that, she was four months pregnant! I was always impressed by Deja's work ethic, but I gained an entirely new level of respect for her one day.It was a Friday night, and Deja and I were working the closing shift together. It was very busy, and Deja and I were the only ones on shift. We managed to get by, but we were exhausted by the end of the evening. After wiping down the counters and mopping the floors, we closed up shop and went our separate ways. I was eager to get home. I walked a couple blocks to where I had parked my car. Well, it wasn't my car actually. It was my dad's '98 Chevy pickup truck, and it was in rough shape. It had no heat or A/C, the leather seats were cracked beyond repair, and the driver's side door was jammed shut. I sighed as I got in through the passenger side and scooted over to the driver's seat. The whole reason I was working at Tropical Smoothie was to save up enough money to buy my own car. I was hoping to have something more respectable to drive during my senior year of high school. I cranked the old thing up and started on my way home. But soon enough, I spotted Deja walking on the side of the road. There was no sidewalk here, the light was low, and she was dangerously close to the passing cars. I pulled over and offered her a ride. She got in and explained that she was on her way home. Apparently she didn't have a car and had been walking to work every day. I couldn't believe it. Here I was complaining about my set of wheels, while Deja didn't have any to begin with.We got to talking, and she confessed that she had been having a tough time. You would never know from the way she was so cheerful at work, but Deja had a lot on her plate. She was taking care of her mother, her boyfriend had just lost his job, and she was worried about making ends meet. And of course, she was expecting a baby in five months. On top of all that, she had been walking nearly a mile to and from work every day. The whole thing was a real eye opener, and made me reconsider some things in my own life. For one, I didn't mind driving my dad's truck anymore. It was banged up, sure, but it was a lot better than nothing. My mindset had changed. I appreciated the truck now. I began to think about other things differently, too. I started making mental notes of all the things in my life I was thankful for — my family, my friends, my health. I became grateful for what I had, instead of obsessing over the things I didn't. I also gained more awareness of the world outside my own little bubble. My encounter with Deja had shown me first-hand that everyone is dealing with their own problems, some worse than others. So I started paying more attention to my friends, family members, and coworkers. I started listening more and asking how I could help. I also gave Deja a ride home for the rest of the summer. These are all small things, of course, but I think they make a difference. I realized I'm at my best when I'm not fixated on my own life, but when I'm considerate of the lives around me. I want to keep this in mind as I continue to grow and develop as a person. I want to continue to search for ways to support the people around me. And most importantly, I want to keep things in perspective.Feedback from admissions professional Bill JackToo often we can be focused on our own problems that we fail to realize that everyone has their own things going on in their lives, too. This essay showcases how it's important to put things in perspective, a skill that certainly will prove invaluable in college... and not just in the classroom. Another reason I like this essay is because it provides deeper insight into the student's life. Sure, you might have mentioned in your activities list that you have a job. But as this essay does, you can show why you have the job in the first place, what your responsibilities are, and more.A few last tipsWe hope these essay examples gave you a bit of inspiration of what to include in your own. However, before you go, we'd like to send you off with a few (personal statement) writing tips to help you make your essays as lovely as the memories and anecdotes they're based off of. Without further ado, here are some of our best tips for writing your personal statements:1. Open strongCollege admissions officers read many, many essays (think 50+) a day, which can sometimes cause them to start blending together and sounding alike. One way to avoid your essay from simply fading into the background is to start strong. This means opening your essay with something memorable, whether an interesting personal anecdote, a descriptive setting, or anything else that you think would catch a reader's attention (so long as it's not inappropriate). Not only might this help college admissions officers better remember your essay, but it will also make them curious about what the rest of your essay will entail.2. Be authenticPerhaps most important when it comes to writing personal statement essays is to maintain your authenticity. Ultimately, your essays should reflect your unique stories and quirks that make you who you are, and should help college admissions officers determine whether you'd truly be a good fit for their school or not. So, don't stress trying to figure out what colleges are looking for. Be yourself, and let the colleges come to you!3. Strong writingThis one may seem a little obvious, but strong writing will certainly appeal to colleges. Not only will it make your essay more compelling, but it may show colleges that you're ready for college-level essay writing (that you'll likely have to do a lot of). Just remember that good writing is not limited to grammar. Using captivating detail and descriptions are a huge part of making your essay seem more like a story than a lecture.4. ProofreadLast but not least, remember to proofread! Make sure your essay contains no errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. When you're done proofreading your essay yourself, we would also recommend that you ask a teacher, parent, or other grammatically savvy person to proofread your essay as well.Final thoughts With those in hand, we hope you now have a better sense of how to write your personal statement. While your grades and test scores are important when it comes to college admissions, it's really your essays that can "make" or "break" your application. Although this may make it seem like a daunting task, writing an amazing personal statements essay is all about effort. Thus, so long as you start early, follow the advice listed above, and dedicate your time and effort to it, it's entirely possible to write an essay that perfectly encapsulates you. Good luck, and happy writing!Also see: Scholarships360's free scholarships search toolFrequently asked questions about writing personal statements How do you write a powerful personal statement? A powerful personal statement will be the one that you put time and effort into. If you follow the steps above, you will be sure to find something to write about that is important to you and shows off who you are. The most powerful personal statements are the ones that the reader can really gain an idea of the writer, their motives, and their goals through.What makes an amazing personal statement? An amazing personal statement should be specific to you! This means that you should stay away from being too general. Write about something with a specific purpose in mind about what you are trying to convey about yourself. And again, if you follow the steps above, you should be sure to do this!How do you start an amazing personal statement? Your personal statement should read more like a story than an academic essay. So, you don't need to write an introduction that will lay out everything you're about to discuss. Let your essay unfold naturally. Choose the most logical starting point and start writing there. Starting can often feel like the hardest part, but the good news is, you can always go back to the start of your essay and make adjustments as you go along. Don't stress too much about immediately finding the perfect start, rather, let it come to you as you write.