



Four Things You Don't Want to Accidentally Communicate in Your College Essay

What you say is not always what you communicate. Subtext matters. The people who read your essay will be reading between the lines to get a glimpse of who you are as a person. Here are four common unintended messages you want to avoid.

1. “I’m not quite ready to leave the nest.”

One of the tried and true prompts asks students to write about someone who has influenced them. Many students choose to write about Mom or Dad in their essay. They might also choose to write about their dog or a grandparent. These are indeed influential relationships. But be careful when writing about your loved ones and what that might inadvertently say about you. It can sound like you are still somewhat attached. Admissions officers for colleges far from home might be reluctant to offer admission to someone they fear won't make the geographic leap. So, if there is something particularly wise you've learned from these influential relationships, great. Just be careful to discuss the influence and how it's motivated you to launch.

2. “I have a limited world view.”

Another favorite prompt is to discuss a challenge or difficult situation and what you learned from it. If you choose this prompt, be sure to demonstrate you can see past the end of your nose. Maybe don't write about losing the big game or about how you broke your foot before prom and couldn't wear those sassy new shoes. There is a big, Big, BIG world out there. Demonstrate you understand there's a bigger picture. Reveal your empathy, compassion, and character. These things will reflect well on you. Droning on about how your heart was broken after that missed field goal? Not so much.

3. “I don't play well with others.”

Admissions officers want to imagine you interacting with like-minded students on campus. They are building a class and want to get to know you and how you'd fit into

their community culture. They want to know that you are ready willing and able to participate. So, you might not want to write about your passion for Overwatch or Minecraft.

4. “I’m spoiled.”

“I hope I never have to read another essay about a service or mission trip or a family vacation to Europe,” says every admissions officer ever. I’m not saying there’s anything wrong with mission trips or family vacations, but if you put them in your college essay, you are raising a big, red flag. Resist writing about things that communicate privilege.

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