

TopAdmit College Application Essay Critique Sample

Dear applicant,

The topic you have chosen for this essay is compelling and personal, but it's the way you twist around the reader's expectations of your experience that really makes this memorable. As I read the second half of your essay, I was drawn in by the fact that you were able to put this very insightful and unexpected "spin" on such a tragic event in your life.

In editing this essay, I played up even more the theme of how your father's leaving taught you to be an independent person. To do this, I first added a couple of new sentences to the introduction. Then, after following the basic flow of your original essay, I switched around a few ideas at the end, so that the essay closes with what is basically a restatement of the opening.

The primary weaknesses included overuse of generic clichés like “learned my lesson,” “whatever hurts makes you stronger,” “become a better person,” etc. In addition, you sounded at times angry at your father. While you may be (and with reason), the essay should convey a more mature attitude, as if you are past it and appreciate the experience for what it was. The reference to suicide was absolutely inappropriate in an essay like this one, which is used in part to evaluate if a candidate can handle the strains of college life. Each year, at any given college, people commit suicide; avoid even a mention of it.

Another major flaw is a tendency to make generalizations. The essay must remain focused on you. For example, in one place the essay comments at length on how some people party too much freshman year. It does not really have anything specific to say about this, so the entire section weakens the essay. You can express the same thought by focusing on you.

Here are my comments on specific parts of your essay:

Paragraph 1

I deleted the original quote--not because it's not a good quote that many people can relate to—but because it's a common way to begin an essay. Admissions officers are going to be reading thousands of these things, and you don't want their eyes to glaze over with your first sentence.

I also deleted most of your first paragraph, which was a weak introduction. For short college essays, get to the point quickly. They will only be read for a few minutes. Also, the essay loses its thunder if it begins by hinting in general terms at the content of the

essay before actually telling the story.

Avoid questioning the reader directly, as this is an overdone strategy. Besides, they are questions you had and are more powerful when presented as your own questions.

Paragraph 2

This paragraph reflects a mature attitude, rather than your anger (“victim of a fugitive father,” etc.).

Paragraph 3

This paragraph explains in detail how you will apply these lessons to college.

Paragraph 4

The original conclusion had a number of clichés. Express the same thought in a minimum of words and your essay will stand out as refreshing and powerful. The last sentence references the opening paragraph, as the essay comes full circle.

I hope that these revisions and comments have been helpful to you. I enjoyed reading and working on your essay, and I wish you the best of luck with the admissions process.

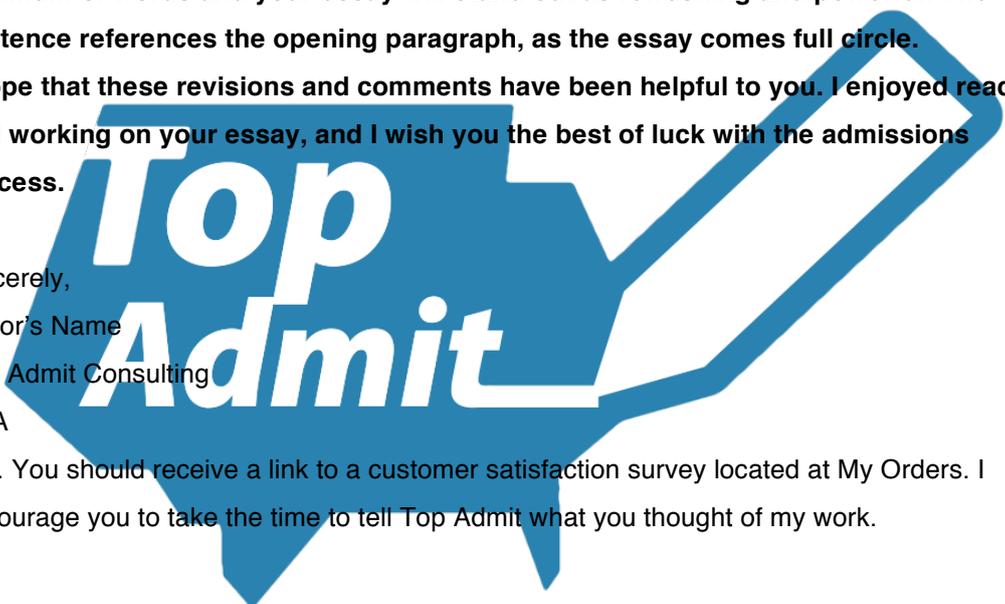
Sincerely,

Editor's Name

Top Admit Consulting

USA

P.S. You should receive a link to a customer satisfaction survey located at My Orders. I encourage you to take the time to tell Top Admit what you thought of my work.

The logo for Top Admit Consulting is a blue graphic of a graduation cap (mortarboard) with a tassel. The words "Top Admit" are written in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font across the front of the cap. The tassel is on the right side, pointing upwards and to the right.

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