

# Getting In:

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- Application Essays for:
  - Graduate and Professional Schools
  - Internships
  - Special Programs

Designed by  
Duke University's Writing Studio

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Writing an  
Effective Application Essay  
Involves Several Steps

# Writing an Effective Application Essay Involves Several Steps, Including:

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- Pre-Writing

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- Drafting

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- Pre-Writing
- Drafting
- Revising

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# Pre-Writing

## During the Pre-Writing Stage:

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3. Reflect on yourself

## Pre-Writing 1:

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Read the Instructions

# When You Read the Instructions:

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- Adhere to page and word limits.

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- Adhere to page and word limits.
- Err on the side of brevity.

## Pre-Writing 2:

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Research the Field  
and the Program

## When You Research the Field and the Program, Ask Yourself:

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- Why are you interested in *this* program?

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- What is special about the faculty, courses, placement record, facilities?

## Pre-Writing 3:

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Reflect on Yourself

# When You Reflect on Yourself, Ask:

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- What motivates and interests you?
- What special skills – such as leadership, management, research, or communication – do you have?
- Why should the program choose you over other applicants?

Reflect on  
Yourself:

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A Practice Exercise

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- Brainstorm a list of adjectives that your friends might use to describe you. For example, curious, imaginative, resourceful, creative, etc.
- Try to think of an anecdote or example from your life to illustrate that quality. The qualities you select should be ones that fit in with the program to which you are applying.

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# Writing A Draft

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- Decide how specific you want to be about your future goals, depending on the program.
- Be straightforward about any information in your application you need to explain.
- **Avoid clichés and inflated, specialized, or technical language.**

Write a Draft:

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Dos and Don'ts

Write a Draft:

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Dos

## When You Write a Draft, Do:

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- Assure your audience you look forward to the challenges of the program.
- Be straightforward about any information in your application you need to explain.
- Overall, assure your audience you are capable academically, willing to adhere to the program's demands, and interesting to have around.

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Don'ts

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Taking Risks

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- Assess the benefits and drawbacks of such a strategy.

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Revising

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- Solicit more feedback.
- **Revise it yet again.**

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- Seek out someone in the field to read and comment.
- Set your essay aside for a while.
- Revise it again.
- Solicit more feedback.
- Revise it yet again.
- **Proofread and format the essay, using conventional font size and margins.**

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Good luck with  
“getting in”!

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Interested In A More  
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And click on:

["Schedule An Appointment"](#) or  
["Workshop/Group Sign Up"](#)

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# Online Resources

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- <http://www.essayedge.com/>
- <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/lrc/writecenter/web/gradapp.html>
- <http://psych.hanover.edu/handbook/applic2.html>
- <http://socialworkschool.tripod.com/essay.html>
- <http://www.accepted.com/>
- <http://www.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradprof/grad/gradappprocess.html>

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# Other Resources

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- Curry & Kasbar. *Essays That Worked: 50 essays from successful applications to the nation's top colleges*. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990.
- Stelzer, Richard J. *How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School, Third Edition*. Princeton, New Jersey: Peterson's, 1997.