

# Critique and Edit



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*You are a college admissions officer. You are reviewing an essay in response to the question: What have you done to prepare yourself financially for college? Review the guidelines below to evaluate this essay's strengths and weaknesses. Would you recommend this student for admission based on this personal statement? Why or why not?*

My first college meeting with my school guidance counselor, Mr. Grannan, left me with a Tasmanian devil's sense of the college application process. As I walked back to study hall, I reviewed the handout of everything I would have to do: study for and take the college entrance exams, research schools, request applications, ask teachers and my coach for recommendations, write the college essay. At dinner that night I anxiously gave my parents an overview of all that lay ahead of me. I was anticipating their usual proclamations of faith in me followed by my mother's goofy jokes about the kind of crazed creature I was about to become. Instead my mom soberly stated, "We've saved since the day you were born, but it won't be enough. Honey, you'll have to get a job."

Admittedly, initially there was a sense of anger: I thought that I had done my part and that paying for college was their job. But I came to the realization that college is my opportunity and working to pay for it is just one more way of making it happen. So I chose the job that promised the most money possible: waiting tables. It's a simple job with a very clear reward system. Run around, deliver people's orders, be friendly, be patient, and get an immediate response: a good tip or a bad one.

After a double shift at Papa Joe's on Saturday, my body aches while my mind still maintains the fast tempo of Saturday night in a restaurant. Keeping up the pace, I quickly count my tips, put them into a deposit envelope, and mark the total on the outside. Sometimes it's easy to think of college only in terms of dollars and deficit: how much I have saved and how much more I need...

We're all in our own separate but parallel universes: We see the same things but don't experience them in the same way. I know that sometimes, in a way that I've kept hidden from myself, I've believed that this world was my universe, and that I should be given what I want. Depositing my weekly tips in the bank staves off the need for immediate gratification.

The anxiety I felt leaving Mr. Grannan's office has been replaced by an awareness that I am in control of the situation. Financial preparation is not really about money but about taking responsibility for oneself.

## Editing Tips

### Message:

Does the writer address this idea in an interesting and personal way?

### Tone:

Is the tone of voice consistent and positive?

### Metaphor, Simile, Imagery:

Does the writer use details that don't tell the reader things, but rather illustrate feelings through behavior and word choice?

### Diction:

Does the writer make strong and varied word choices that are vivid and appropriate?

### Sentences:

Does the writer use sentence lengths in a way that creates dramatic emphasis?

### Focus:

Is the essay focused and personal? Does it try to cover too much or too little?

### Paragraphs:

Is each paragraph unified around one idea?

### Transitions:

Are there transitions within and between paragraphs that give a clear sense of analytical progression?

### Introduction:

Does the introduction hook the reader (admissions officer)?

### Conclusion:

Does the conclusion elaborate upon the ideas set forth in the essay and address their greater significance?

### Audience:

Does the essay show how the writer could become a valuable member of the desired college's community?

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