

College Application Essay/Personal Statement Rubric

Category	Description of Writing Quality	Rating	Weight
Organization Writer's experience is conveyed through a cohesive structure.	Progression from paragraph to paragraph and sentence to sentence is smooth and logical.		X 2
	Transitions are used meaningfully and not forced; transitions within paragraphs and especially between paragraphs to preserve the logical flow of the essay. Writer avoids using words such as, "however," "nevertheless," and "furthermore."		
	A variety of sentence lengths and structures are mixed within any given paragraph.		
Development Insight into the writer's experience is shown through rich detail.	Presentation is thoughtful or insightful (e.g., an unusual perspective, a particularly unique experience).		X 2
	The writing uses concrete, vivid language .		
	The writing shows depth and complexity of thought. Elaboration in each paragraph is of sufficient depth and detail.		
	Essay details make statements for the writer (show vs. tell).		
Voice Language engages the reader throughout the writing.	Writing focuses on verbs and keeps adjectives to a minimum.		X 2
	Writer employs active voice ; passive sentence constructions are avoided.		
	Writing sounds authentic and original— word choice doesn't appear contrived.		
	Writing avoids slang terms, clichés, contractions , and an excessively casual tone . Clichés make writing appear lazy, ideas ordinary, and experiences typical.		
Conventions Complex ideas are communicated through sophisticated forms of expression.	Writing represents consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and syntax. Errors do not distract from the overall fluency of the composition.		X 1
	Minor errors result from the attempt to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression.		
	Words, phrases, and sentence structure enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.		
Final Grade			/50

Additional Comments:

This Trait of Humans

Each season as it arrives, it is my favorite, and this chilled, hesitant fall is no exception. I live on a country road, straight and small and blanketed by trees and a neighbor's solitary farm. The leaves are falling now; the maples and birches seem to shiver visibly, waiting for snow. Plants, animals, and humans alike are shifting into predetermined patterns: bright, flighty colors are replaced with quiet, browner ones, while lazy, breezy moods become busy preparation. It is a beautiful time to be alive and aware in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The only apparent hindrance to this concerto of seasons is the human indifference present here.

A month ago I walked along the roads near my house watching summer slip away; the sky was blue and clear, the trees unchecked and green, the fields open and barely dotted with houses. Only below me was any hint of human indifference. Along the roadside, almost hidden by dry, yellow grasses, were aluminum cans, plastic bottles, and bits of paper, left by inconsiderate passers-by and deer hunters, interested only in their alert prey. To let the coming snow cover the trash would be wrong, so I gathered them into plastic bags. Picking up one crushed can after another, I attempted with freezing fingers to save the natural world ten feet at a time. Some of the trash had gathered rain and dirt, and when shifted it emptied brown and rancid water onto my hands and the ground, as if weeping an apology for its obvious misplacement. By the end of an afternoon I was cold, tired, and totally discouraged. The bags full of trash I had gathered made little difference to the fight against abuse of the earth; instead, they symbolized a disgusting trait in humans: the self-centered habit of leaving tracked scars in the earth.

It is, to me, as deep a sin to litter the world we share as to cripple hundreds in nuclear warfare. I have been lucky enough to grow in and around the wild world, and to have parents who taught me a deep appreciation for nature and, in turn, for the potential good man possesses. I truly want to find the good in people as I have in the natural world. My simplest concern as I grow into the world is what to *do* with the observations I possess.

A while ago I began reading the works of Helen Caldicott, the founder of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute. She has spent her life teaching about the horrors of nuclear warfare, and Dr. Caldicott has become my first true hero. While my motivation is salvation of the world *around* the human race, I recognize in her a love of life and a desperate need to share it. I want desperately to learn, to be heard, and to save humanity from itself; at the same time, I am disgusted with what we do to the earth and to each other, and I'm not convinced that I want to save such potential destruction. There are these small things, these rotting bits of human waste that make me doubt. As certain as I wish to be, I can't help but wonder what use there is in saving humanity when it ravages the earth.

Perhaps there is another, brighter answer. Despite all our failings, we humans know love and can be taught appreciation. We share this earth and depend on it; our survival is dependent on the survival of our home planet. The lesson of an ultimately peaceful morality, while directly preventing war and self-destruction, cannot help but teach a code of nature conservation as well. In learning to be peaceful, we will dissolve what threatens us from within and end the threat to what surrounds us.

Within days it will snow here, and the world will, for a short time, be clean and white and peaceful. Eventually the land will be littered again, and the waste will wait for another hand to pick it up. If the potential good I believe in prevails, the next season in the human story can be a brighter one, and I will welcome it as I welcome this gray November.

November 2002