



Personal Statement Essay Checklist

- ☐ Does the essay respond to the prompt thoroughly?
- ☐ Is the point of the essay clear near the beginning? Is the essay thematically focused to allow deeper exploration and avoid treating topics shallowly?
- ☐ Does the introduction get a reader into the story quickly and avoid an excessively slow build? Does it avoid clichés like “Ever since I was very young, I have wanted to . . .”?
- ☐ Do you avoid “telling” with basic labels like “I’m passionate about . . .” or “I value . . .”? Instead, use specific personal examples and stories to *show* these qualities and/or values in your life.
- ☐ Have you included only relevant details and avoided tangential information?
- ☐ Does the essay avoid unnecessary efforts at suspense or a surprise twist?
- ☐ Does the essay emphasize your strengths and recent growth (even while you may need to explain possible weaknesses in your transcript or other records) and show how or why you are now prepared for your educational goals?
- ☐ Have you avoided outrageous or hyperbolic statements? Have you considered your audience, both who they are (admissions officer or scholarship reviewer) and what they might be looking for? Avoid unrealistic exaggeration, such as the goal of changing the world with a single new app you want to develop.
- ☐ Have you avoided mentions of school ranking or other complimentary statements about the school?
- ☐ Does the essay sound authentic and human, or are you just writing what you think the audience wants to see? *Note: AI-generated content tends to sound overly general, vague, and boring because it won’t have specific details from your lived experience.
- ☐ Is the essay free of grammatical and mechanical errors? *This is where AI can be helpful.
- ☐ Does the essay fall within the word count limit? (Demonstrate you know how to follow instructions.)