**College Application Essay Edits**

**Introductions: Hooking the Reader**

The best essays usually begin with something catchy, something to lure the reader into the piece. Basically, it is a hook – a phrase, sentence, or idea that will nab readers’ interest so completely that they will keep on reading almost in spite of themselves. Once you have hooked your readers, you can lead them anywhere.

Hooks must be very sharp, very clean. They must surprise, inform or tickle the reader in an instant. A dull hook will not do.

*First Edit:*

1. *What is the writer’s hook?*
2. *Write or suggest an idea for a sharper hook.*

**The Body: Putting the Pieces Together:**

In a typical college essay, a body consisting of three sections will be just about right. Why three? Three is a number that works. When you can make three statements about a subject, you are probably knowledgeable about the topic. One is too simple, and two is still pretty shabby, but three is thoughtful. Psychologically, three creates a sense of wholeness, like the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Each point does not necessarily receive equal treatment. You might manage one point with a single paragraph, but the others may be more. Each point has to be distinctive. Your third point must not be a rerun of the first or second.

*Second Edit:*

1. *Identify the three distinct paragraphs.*
2. *Do the paragraphs follow a logical order? Explain.*

**Transitions and Paragraphs: Taking the Reader by the Hand**

Readers need to be led. As you write, think of the readers as tourists and your essay as a trip they take from one place to another. You are their guide, their travel agent.

Help readers along by choosing words that set up relationships between one idea and the next. This can be done with such words as *this*, which ties the sentence you are now reading, for example, to the previous one. The English language supplies many words and phrases for tying sentences and ideas together, among them:

also, too, further, in addition, similarly, as a result, however, for instance, on the other hand, consequently, therefore, although, moreover, nevertheless, now, this, still, another, finally, in the first place, regardless, on the contrary, better still, yet

The inventor of the paragraph also figured out a simple way to mark the path through a piece of writing. The paragraph indentation is a signal to readers to get ready for a change in thought or idea, somewhat like the directional blinker telling other drivers that you are about to turn.

Whether your readers skim the paragraphs or slog doggedly through every word, they need to find sentences now and then that, like landmarks, help them to know where they are. Such guiding sentences differ from others because they define the paragraph’s main topic; hence the name *topic sentence.*

*Third Edit:*

1. *What are the transition words/transitions in the body’s paragraphs?*
2. *What are the topic sentences of the body’s paragraphs?*

**The Conclusion: Giving a Farewell Gift**

When you reach the end of your essay, you can hit save one last time and be done with it. Better still, you can present your reader with a little something to remember you by, a gift – an idea to think about, a line to chuckle over, a memorable phrase or quotation. Whatever you give, the farewell gift must fit the content, style, and mood of your essay. A tacked-on ending will puzzle, not delight, your readers. Send your readers off feeling glad that they stayed with you to the end.

*Fourth Edit:*

1. *What gift has the writer left?*
2. *Do you have a suggestion for a better gift? Explain whether you answer yes or no.*

(Information taken largely from *Writing a Successful College Application Essay: The Key to College Admission*)