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# 1. Quality in Academic Writing: Is it just song and dance?

All online academic paper writing companies (without exception) promise to offer custom essays, research papers, etc, that are of the highest quality. We can get into reasons why many do not live up to expectations but let's focus on what real **quality academic writing** is all about so that we can spot a con a mile away before getting ripped off.

The question that needs to be asked therefore is: can the quality of an academic paper be determined before you get that failing grade? What should you look for when you receive your paper from the paper writing service of choice?

While the checklist below does not guarantee you a passing grade, it gives you a very accurate idea of whether you are getting your money's worth. If you weigh your paper against it and find that it deviates widely from the checklist, chances are that your paper is poorly written, rushed

1. **Following tutor's instructions:** All writing guides in the world are not a substitute for your tutor/lecturer's instructions. Your paper should strictly seek to fulfill all the requirements handed over by the examining authority. If a grading rubric

is

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provided then care should be taken to follow it to the letter.

**2. Organization and structure:** The paper you present should be neat as this would appeal to the reader's eye. Basically most academic papers are structured in a similar manner. The most common structure for essays and term papers is

- Abstract (optional)
- Introduction
- Body paragraphs
- Conclusion
- References
- Appendix (optional)

In the same way, research papers, dissertations and theses follow a general structure as follows:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Analysis
- Results
- Discussion

- Conclusion
- List of sources
- Appendix (optional)

**2. The Introduction:** A great paper starts with... duh... a great introduction. This is the point of entry to your paper. **A good introduction should:**

- Open the main issues of the question
- Indicate the way the question will be addressed
- Outline how the essay is structured
- Offer a statement of the types of conclusion to be drawn.

**3. Coherence:** The most important aspect of the body of any paper is clarity of ideas (coherence) and smooth transition from one idea to the next. Poor quality papers are incoherent and difficult to read.

**4. Paragraphs that support the central argument:** Another sign of a quality paper is that the body paragraphs support the thesis statement one after the other. Paragraphs that have a vague relationship with the main argument of the paper are an indication of poor quality.

**5. In text citations and referencing:** It is paramount to give credit to the sources you

use in your paper. Whether you quote any author word by word or just paraphrase an idea from other literary works, you are required to document your sources within the body of your text (in text citation) and include full citation at the end of your text. There are different styles of documenting sources such as APA, MLA and Chicago/Turabian among others. A good quality paper will adhere strictly to the chosen formatting guide. Inconsistencies when documenting sources are a sign of a. Similarly, when listing down the sources at the end of the paper, this should be done according to the particular formatting style. Additionally the full bibliographic information should be presented whenever possible.

**6. Grammar and language:** Poor grammar and incorrect use of language is a major giveaway in academic paper writing. Typos and run-on sentences will spoil even the well researched paper. Other tutors and professors will give a failing grade to papers characterized by poor grammar run-on sentences and typos. These indicate lack of thoroughness. As such, papers should be proofread carefully and all sentences that make no sense or are difficult to read rewritten.

**7. Conclusion:** It is easy to give the least attention to your conclusion. However your conclusion is meant to tie everything together in support of your main argument or thesis statement. Here you can call for action and give recommendation if appropriate. You may also open room for more research in the same times. A conclusion is not supposed to merely be a summary of your body. Neither are you to

introduce anything new that has not been covered in your text.

**8. Credibility of sources:** The sources you use in writing your paper will say a lot about the quality of your research. It is important to use authority sources. Newspapers, magazines and some historical books, **government and organizational websites** are good primary sources while journals, books are good secondary sources. It is prudent to use a mixture of primary and secondary sources as well as variety of these. Online sources whose academic authority cannot be ascertained such as Wikipedia, answers.com and other article mills should be avoided.

**9. Plagiarism.** Among our list of vices, plagiarism requires special attention. Plagiarism is unauthorized or improper use of other people's work in your paper. Plagiarism can be intentional (where the writer is just trying to be cheeky) or unintentional (the most common form). In academia, plagiarism is a serious offence that has ethics as its key component and depending on your institution's policy on plagiarism; this offence can have serious consequences including expulsion from college. That's the bad news; the good news is that plagiarism can easily be avoided. With the advent of internet, literacy materials have become very readily available. This is a good thing but has unfortunately been abused thus increasing incidences of plagiarism in academia. There are numerous affective tools in use today to check for plagiarism in submitted work. Here are a few tips to help you avoid plagiarism in your paper:



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- a. **Be original:** In research the goal is not for you to repeat and reorganize what has been done before. Instead you are expected to shed some new light on your chosen topic. You use other people to help in the thought process as well as to support your assertions. Otherwise try to approach your topic with an open and independent mind.
  
- b. **Paraphrase:** Use your own words to explain somebody's ideas. You are still required to give credit to this source.
  
- c. **Cite your sources properly:** Documenting your sources in accordance to the instructions given by your lecturer/tutor will save you much trouble.

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## 2. Writing a College Application essay

The prospect of writing a college admission essay is fraught with anxiety. This is because this single activity can make or break your chances of making it to a college of your choice. The following tips are suggested to ease the pain. 3 steps are recommended:

### 1. Brainstorming

This step is a journey of self discovery whose aim is to bring to the fore your **accomplishments, strengths, struggles, victory over challenges, passions, adhering philosophy and dreams**. These are to be synthesized into distinguishing attributes that can be presented in your essay to set you apart from the hundreds of applicants. Below are some questions to guide you:

Are there some notable accomplishments in your life? These need not to be just the ones you've been recognized for but even commonplace stuff can be important if placed in the context of your life.

- Do you have any unique attribute
- Is there some challenging moments in your life that shaped your perspective?
- Consider struggles, victories and defeats. What was your response?
- What are your favorite books, movies and how have they influenced your life?
- What are you passionate about?

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- What activities have you participated in that espouse values sought out by the institution?
- What is your guiding principle?
- What are your long-term goals and how does the college fit into these?

During this process, you can seek input from family, friends and people who know you as well as reading sample admission essays.

## 2. Drafting your essay

Having gone through the brainstorming stage, you now have a better idea of the elements you want to incorporate into your essay. Here are some things to focus on and others to avoid

Focus on:

- Strength of personality and not on things you have done
- Finding patterns and connections; for example does your election as the editor for the high school magazine and your achievement at the state essay writing competition reflect on your passion for
- Selecting a topic that allows you to combine your prominent **personal attributes and qualities** into a sound paper while addressing your aspiration to be admitted into the particular institution.

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- Provide evidence how you will fit into the institution's environment.

### Avoid

- Repeating information provided elsewhere in your application
- Jokes and being funny unless you must.
- Listing weaknesses unless you are willing to explain how they make you better suited for admission.
- Controversial topics unless you acknowledge counter arguments
- Topics that will turn off people
- Lying or trying to carve the image of superman

It is prudent to allocate sufficient time for the 2 processes above. We recommend any time between a few days to a few weeks for the

### 3. Tips for writing your final draft

Impressing an admission officer with your application essay is not easy. However, here are some tips that will go a long way into improving your chances.

- **Be creative.** You can bring to life even the duller of topics by being creative. You can begin your essay with an appropriate quote or an anecdote but you must be careful that it fits flawlessly into the rest of your essay.
- **Take time to write a great introduction.** The introduction gives you the opportunity to make the first impression. As such, your introduction should be well thought, clear



and should not appear to be hastily written. You must grab the interest of the admission officers and possibly raise question in their minds that will make them want to read further.

- **Your admission essay must fit together.** Make sure that the body paragraphs fit your introduction. You must not jump from one idea to the other in a haphazard manner and neither should you try to cram everything into your essay. This will only give your essay an appearance of being scattered. Furthermore, the admission committee understands that the essay can only contain snippets of who you are.
- **Be Lively.** Your essay must be interesting to read. Give your audience details that allow them to clearly see the setting. Use names where possible as their use give the essay a human feel. Use of imagery will also heighten the reader's interest since your experiences feature prominently as supporting details.
- **Be Yourself.** The admission essay is about you, your feelings, how you think, and your response to various happenings. How did you respond when you won/didn't win the basketball competition? What does that reveal about you? The way your mind works is what distinguishes you from everybody else and you need bring that out.
- **Portray a pleasant personality.** College is a place where you are required to interact with other students as well as the faculty and staff. Find a way in your essay of showing that you are easy to get along with.
- **Honesty the best policy.** It is not necessary to overstate achievements or invent events that did not happen. Just use the truthful, seemingly unremarkable

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