

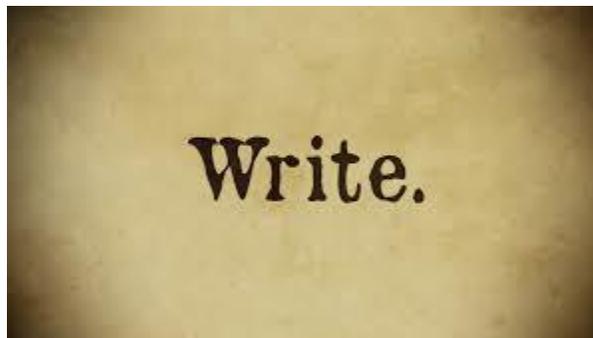
10 Tips To Writing A Killer Essay



1. Freewrite and narrow your topic to one that is small enough to be workable but broad enough to enable you to say what you have to say.
2. Know who your audience is. This is crucial. You might be thinking, “But the professor is my audience” and in a sense you are right. So ask yourself, how much does the professor know about my subject? How is she going to react to it? If you are writing about something she knows little about, then you will have to do more explaining and defining than you would if you were writing about a topic she is well-versed in. Or, imagine yourself writing a letter to the city council in your town, asking them to allocate funding to build a park in a poor area. You need to ask yourself are they aware there is a need for such a park? Do they know how the residents would benefit from it? If the city is facing a financial crisis you will have to go the extra mile to convince them that this park is important. Never forget this step, for it is an essential one.
3. Establish your tone. The tone of your essay takes the place of your tone of voice in making a speech. Is your tone angry, passionate, enthusiastic about your subject? Consider this excerpt from an essay a student wrote about Dragsters and Funny cars:

“Wild is the only way to describe top fuel dragster and funny car racing action. They can go from zero up to 333 mph in less than four and three quarter seconds or they could erupt into a ball of fire, you're just never sure.”

This was how he began his essay, with his enthusiasm for the subject shining like a beacon through every word. He concluded: “Funny car or top fuel dragster, the spectator is guaranteed a thrill. Wow, what a ride!”



4. Establish your attitude toward your subject. Like your tone, your attitude reveals your approach to your topic. Are you upbeat, feeling good about it? Is your attitude positive, as if you are certain that the reader will feel as good about it as you do? Are you appealing to “the better angels of our nature,” as Abraham Lincoln did, when he said, “With malice toward none, with charity for all”? Or are you trying to reach the darker side of human nature, like George Wallace did when he called for, “Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!”

Consider this quote from a student who wrote about comparing Santa Maria style barbecue as opposed to Memphis style:

“Like a fine glass of wine paired together with a beautiful sunset. There's nothing like a finger licking, mouthwatering BBQ that will knock your socks off. Paired with a tall glass of ice tea. Mrnm, good! Can you taste it? Can you smell it? The game is on. The grill is sizzling hot, and the smoke is rolling good.”

Her love for this topic is evident in every word.

5. Establish your purpose in writing. OK I know your purpose is to get a good grade. But there is a better than average chance that after you graduate you may have to do some writing on the job, whatever profession you go into. You need to know what you want to accomplish with this essay. Are you trying to convince your audience to vote for a particular candidate, (or to vote against one). Do you want your audience to take an action of some kind? Or do you just want to give information, but putting your own “slant” on a subject at the same time.

This is an excerpt from a student's essay in which he focuses on American legend Davy Crockett: "As a frontiersman, politician, and soldier, Crockett is an example of American folklore where a man's exploits were bigger than himself. His legend began while he lived, but exploded after his death."

So while this student is not trying to convince us of anything good or bad about Davy Crockett, his intention is to tell us that Crockett is an example of how legends get started and then can take on a life of their own and grow bigger with the passage of time.

6. Be sure you have a strong, clear thesis statement. There is nothing more fundamental to good writing than having a powerful and clear thesis statement. So much can be said about thesis statements and their importance that I am going to devote an entire post to it another time. But your thesis statement

serves as a planner, helps you as a writer determine where your essay is going by restricting and controlling your topic and what you have to say about it.

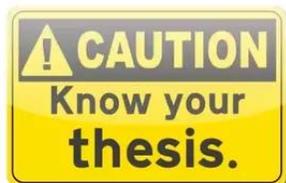
"Illegal immigrants should be welcome in the United States, because they do the

work native born Americans will not do, they pay taxes, and they contribute to the overall growth of the economy." Student paper.

"We should not torture or treat inhumanely terrorists we have captured. The abuse of prisoners harms, not helps, our war effort." Senator John McCain, 2005.

Some like to put the thesis into an equation: Claim + Reason = Thesis statement.

In the first example, "Illegal immigrants should be welcome in the United States" is the claim, and "because they do the work native born Americans will not do, they pay taxes, and they contribute to the overall growth of the economy" is the reason.



In the example from John McCain, the first sentence, “We should not torture or treat inhumanely terrorists we have captured,” is the claim, and “The abuse of prisoners harms, not helps, our war effort” is the reason.

7. Give yourself plenty of time and don't procrastinate. It is nearly impossible to write a quality essay the night before it is due.
8. Write a first draft, and be prepared to write a second, third and fourth if necessary. Revision is to writing what practice is to an athlete.
9. Edit, edit, and re-edit. You will be amazed at how you might overlook a glaring mistake and not find it until you've gone over your essay several times.
10. Write an effective introduction and conclusion.