

Life After College Essay: The essay the only YOU can write

Conclusion: The LAST words the college admissions officer will read!

Objectives:

- Make a final dramatic point
- Reveal an insight gained from the ideas presented in the body of your essay
- Connect you to the college
- Leave the reader with a final impression about you

The Most Important Do and Don't of College Essay Endings

DO: End in the action.

End right after your key moment—end right next to your success! (Whatever “success” means, in your particular essay.) Think of the “fade-to-black” in a movie—you want us to end on the high, glowy feeling. End with the robot’s arm lifting, or your call home to celebrate, or your grandma thanking you. Then stop. Leave your reader wanting more! Keep the admissions officer thinking about you.

DON'T: Summarize.

Here’s your challenge: don’t *ever* say the point of your essay. **Cut every single “that’s when I realized” and “I learned” and “the most important thing was...”** Every single one. They’re boring, unconvincing, and doing you no favors.

When you tell the reader what to feel, or think, you stop telling a story. And then the reader stops connecting with you. And then they stop caring. Don’t let this happen. **Don’t summarize.**

5 Ways to Powerfully End Your College Essay

1. Dialogue.

Did someone tell you good job, or thank you, or congratulate you? Did you finally speak up, or get something done? Put it in dialogue. It’s a powerful way to end. In fact, it’s an easy revision of those “I learned...” sentences earlier. So you learned to never give up?

“Hey mom,” I said into my phone. “Yeah, I’m not coming home right away—I’ve got practice.”
BOOM. Look at that.

2. Action

Here’s a simple example:

I pushed open the door, and stepped inside.

Even without context, you can tell this student took a risk and committed to something. It’s all in the *actions*.

3. Description

Maybe you want to end in a mood, or by creating a wider view of things, or by focusing in on a certain important object.

The whole robot shuddered as it creaked to life and rolled across the concrete floor. Its silver arm gently grasped the upturned box, and then, lifted it.

There's some combination here with action, but that's perfectly fine.

4. Go full circle.

Did you talk to someone at the beginning? You might end by talking to them again. Or if you described a certain object, you might mention it again. There are lots of ways to end where you began, and it's often a really satisfying technique.

5. Directly address the college.

Tell them what you're going to do there, or what you're excited about. I did this, actually in mine—something like:

*And that's why I'm so excited about the Core Curriculum: I'm going to study **everything**.*

This technique breaks the "don't tell them what your essay is about" rule—but only a little. Be sure to still sound like yourself, and to be very confident in your plans.