

# Effective openings



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Effective Openings Don't start an SOP by introducing yourself. The university knows your name. It's on your application form. So don't open by saying " I, Ravi Kapur, am applying to Rice University for a degree in ..."An effective opening grabs the reader's attention and gets him into your story right away. Be original, use your creativity. Here are a few ways you might begin: Make your reader " Imagine .... " You could create a scenario from your past and then indicate how it influenced you or you could create a scenario that captures your future vision and then a show how this program will help you make it a reality. For example, " Imagine a young girl of 10 visiting her father's lab every single day. Imagine her fascinated by the world of test-tubes, formulas scribbled on blackboards, and strange odours she never smelt elsewhere. Chemistry runs in my blood, " and so on. Pose a question. Get the reader thinking along certain lines and establish how your vision addresses that question. For instance, if your vision is to bring technology to a rural environment, you could pose the question, " What if every villager in India had access to a computer? " Use a quotation. For this you need to find a quotation that really relates to your essay. You could either quote someone famous or cook up a striking line yourself and not credit it to anyone.

Structure and Flow in Your SOP and Essay The opening para of your essay or SOP is crucial. Not only must it grab the reader's attention with the effective openings mentioned above, but it must also give an overview of your vision and how the program you are applying to relates to it. This means you have to balance style with substance. Do not make your essay a suspense story, in which no one knows what's happening until the end. This is an admissions essay and there is a very good chance that you will have lost your reader if you are not upfront. The rest of the paragraphs should have a logical

sequence. For instance, in an SOP, you could show how your interest developed in school, then college, then at work. If you have been out of school, you can discuss each job you have had and show how it helped you grow in your field and as a person. Do not go back and forth in your SOP by referring to one incident, then another, then back to the first. Maintain a clear movement forward. Discuss your other interests such as books you like reading or significant talents and hobbies towards the end. There should be a clear flow to the point you are making. When talking about a significant experience that shaped you, always mention what you learnt from it, Also State any related events that underscore the importance of this experience in your life (e. g. you were the youngest to encounter something like this). Always mention the impact of the experience in you life. Always keep the big picture in mind. Relate even a small, specific event to your larger goals or to your overall growth as a person. During the draft stage of your SOP, go through every para and underline the sentence that sums up the main point of the para. If you cannot find such a sentence, write it! A good test of flow is to read the underlined sentences to yourself one after the other. Do they build a story one step at a time? If they are repetitive, you need to restructure information. →→→→→ Don't Conclude an SOP by pleading for Admission Exude some degree of confidence! It is all right to say, " Given the opportunity to be at an institution like Columbia ..., " but do not sound subservient by saying, " I hope that you will be so kind as to give me a place in your esteemed institution. " A university is not doing you a favour by granting you admission, so don't sound like you're asking for one. They will admit you because you're worth it and because they would love to have you as a student and as an alumnus. Often the SOP has a natural ending. You

can let this be. It may leave a stronger impression than a forced concluding sentence. Stick to Word Limits! Sticking to the given word limit is an important way to demonstrate that you know your mind and can express yourself succinctly. Crossing the limit by a few words is okay, but totally ignoring the word limit will indicate that you are either careless or incapable of writing to the point. Keep Your Sentences Short and Clear We have a tendency to express three thoughts in one sentence. We have often been encouraged to write florid, long-winded prose. Be careful not to write such long sentences that the reader loses your chain of thought. Use Active Sentences Instead of Passive ones Active sentences make for more upbeat prose. For instance, Instead of: A prize was awarded to him for the most promising student of the year. You might say He won the prize for the most promising student of the year. Written English is Different from Spoken English! Be sure not to sound too colloquial in your writing. Many things are okay when said orally but not when written. For instance, in your essays it is best to avoid abbreviated forms such as " I'd, couldn't, didn't, " and to say " I would, could not, and did not" instead. Also be wary of using slang or casual expressions such as ' tune into,' ' had a blast' and had enough of.' Use ' really' sparingly. Don't say you are really interested, and you really wish and you really care. It is a weak adjective, okay to use frequently when chatting among friends, but to be avoided in a formal application. Never say ' etc.' Either mention all things the ' etc.' stands for or just end you sentence. Using ' etc.' indicates that you are too lazy to elaborate on the list. This appears casual or careless. Obviously, you will not be denied admission for using the word, but this tip, like all the others, is intended to help you write stronger SOP so that you get into the best school possible. Presentation is everything.

Type your essays neatly. Don't draw bizarre cartoons around your application or be gimmicky.