

In the first step of the essay editing process, the student brings a draft of the application essay for review. The college admission counselor's responsibility is to shape this initial attempt into a well-written essay that impresses admissions officers. Below is a sample essay that the student brought for editing.

University of California: Prompt #3 – Original Draft

Prompt: What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

Conventional examples of a talent or skill would be being able to play an instrument, draw, or speak publicly. My talent, or skill, is being able to effectively communicate. Although it so unorthodox, it is important. When I was younger, I had trouble speaking to others and expressing my feelings, causing me to be a social recluse. I wanted to spend time with others but I did not know how. My fear of rejection combined with poor communication skills adversely affected my life. Finally, I decided that I would try to overcome my fear and work on speaking with others. I started to introduce myself to other people, even though I was deathly afraid of talking to others. Overcoming my fear was difficult, but I forced myself every time. I began to speak more to others and although I eventually developed the courage to talk to others, it did not mean that I effectively communicated. I still had certain childish tendencies, like ignoring others when I am angry, or refusing to listen to criticism. This negatively affected my relationships, but I understood what mistakes I was consistently making and I strove to change them. Many people feel embarrassed when apologizing, leading to the reluctance to do so. I did have this problem myself, but I strove to change this negative aspect. I started swallowing my pride and apologizing, whether or not I wanted to. Not only did I change my reluctance to apologize, but other petty behaviors as well. I became more straightforward with my problems and strove to better my character. Many would not consider effective communication a skill, as it seems like “talking” is just something everyone can do. However, they fail to consider whether or not they can effectively communicate. Effective communication is not the same as simply speaking, as one must develop certain traits to be able to effectively communicate. I had a communication problem since I was young, and so this skill is important for me because I managed to overcome something that plagued me for years.

In the second step, the college admissions counselor will provide feedback on the essay's content, organization and structure, and style. The counselor will advise the student on areas for improvement and work with the student to address those concerns. The comments provided here (in blue balloons) are examples of the type of commentary given to the student.

University of California: Prompt #3 – Original Draft with Comments

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Conventional examples of a talent or skill would be being able to play an instrument, draw, or speak publicly. My talent, or skill, is being able to effectively communicate. Although it so unorthodox, it is important. When I was younger, I had trouble speaking to others and expressing my feelings, causing me to be a social recluse. I wanted to spend time with others but I did not know how. My fear of rejected combined with poor communication skills adversely affected my life. Finally, I decided that I would try to overcome my fear and work on speaking with others. I started to introduce myself to other people, even though I was deathly afraid of talking to others. Overcoming my fear was difficult, but I forced myself every time. I began to speak more to others and although I eventually developed the courage to talk to others, it did not mean that I effectively communicated. I still had certain childish tendencies, like ignoring others when I am angry, or refusing to listen to criticism. This negatively affected my relationships, but I understood what mistakes I was consistently making and I strove to change them. Many people feel embarrassed when apologizing, leading to the reluctance to do so. I did have this problem myself, but I strove to change this negative aspect. I started swallowing my pride and apologizing, whether or not I wanted to. Not only did I change my reluctance to apologize, but other petty behaviors as well. I became more straightforward with my problems and strove to better my character. Many would not consider effective communication a skill, as it seems like "talking" is just something everyone can do. However, they fail to consider whether or not they can effectively communicate. Effective communication is not the same as simply speaking, as one must develop certain traits to be able to effectively communicate. I had a communication problem since I was young, and so this skill is important for me because I managed to overcome something that plagued me for years.

Comment [A1]: This essay needs to be separated into paragraphs so that distinct ideas (although they should be connected) are clear.

Comment [A2]: Explain why you consider this skill "unorthodox" and how the non-traditional aspect shows its importance.

Comment [A3]: Paint a picture using more colorful description.

Comment [A4]: Explain the "adverse" effects on your life. Is there a moment that served as the turning point that made you want to change? Share with the reader to help understand your motivation and reasons.

Comment [A5]: Please state specific examples and incidents. Show the reader rather than summarize your experience.

Comment [A6]: Cite a specific relationship.

Comment [A7]: Cite a specific example, such as an interaction with a friend, peer, or authority figure. State how your communication skills in the exchange affected each individual and the overall outcome.

Comment [A8]: Avoid vagueness.

Comment [A9]: Explain more about the difference between speaking well and effective communication.

Comment [A10]: Need to show overall impact on your life and how you might use this skill in the future to benefit yourself, others, and the world.

Comment [A11]: Show the reader the real changes in your life that have taken place since you've developed the trait. Explain its benefits in multiple areas in your life.

In the third step, the college admissions counselor completes a thorough edit and revision of the each essay draft, modifying structure and word choice to better express the student's ideas and overall message. An essay might take several edits to complete. Below is an example of ONE edit.

University of California: Prompt #3 – Edits

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Before the velvet curtain rose on the Rainbow Theatre's production of The Wizard of Oz, my family friend Anna tried to introduce me to Michelle and Ziyang, her cousins visiting from Taiwan.

"Amy," Anna beckoned. "Stop hiding behind your mom. Come here."

Yet, as Dorothy sang about the Yellow Brick Road and confronted the Great and Powerful Oz, I remained, like the Cowardly Lion, behind my mom, too shy to meet the eyes of Anna or her cousins.

Although unconventional examples, my talent, the ability to ~~of a talent or skill would be being able to play an instrument, draw, or speak publicly.~~ My talent, or skill, is being able to effectively communicate, is one I worked for years to develop. From a young age, I had ~~Although it so unorthodox, it is important.~~ When I was younger, I had trouble speaking to others and expressing my feelings; ~~causing me to be~~ a social recluse, ~~I wanted to~~ ~~I wanted to~~ spend time with others but feared their rejection and judgment. But following that shameful incident at the play, I ~~finally decided~~ resolved to ~~I did not know how.~~ My fear of ~~rejection~~ combined with ~~poor communication skills~~ adversely affected my life. Finally, I decided that I would try to overcome my fear.

~~and work on speaking with others.~~ I ~~shakily began~~ started to introducing myself to others; ~~t~~ people, even though I was deathly afraid of talking to others. Overcoming my fear was difficult, but I forced myself every time. I began to speak more to others and although I ~~eventually developed the courage to talk to others~~ The notion of rejection terrified me, but I refused to allow my insecurities to withhold my development. Although I became more confident and social, I still had inherent problems when conflict arose. I learned to recognize my flaws and set ~~began aside,~~ ~~it did not mean that I effectively communicated.~~ I still had certain childish tendencies, like ignoring others in when I am angry, or refusing to listen to criticism, and learning to apologize, improved my ~~This negatively affected my relationships,~~ ~~but I understood what mistakes I was consistently making and I strove to change them.~~ Many people feel embarrassed when apologizing, leading to the reluctance to do so. I did have this problem myself, but I strove to change this negative aspect. I started swallowing my pride and apologizing, whether or not I wanted to. Not only did I change my reluctance to apologize, but other petty behaviors as well. I became more straightforward with my problems and strove to better my character.

Many ~~would not~~ consider effective communication "just a skill, as it seems like "talking," but it is a skill that must be honed. It is just something everyone can do. However, they fail to

~~consider whether or not they can effectively communicate. Effective communication is not the same as simply speaking, as one must develop certain traits, such as confidence, clarity, and empathy to be able to effectively communicate.~~

~~After years of hesitation and isolation, my life has immensely improved. My communication skills have not only helped me socially, but also academically professionally. During group projects, I am the one who leads others, and resolves conflicts, and My capability of establishing a foundation of understanding that increases our teamwork within the group. Effectively communication prevents misunderstandings and improves efficiency. ing with my group members allows the group to avoid misunderstandings and work efficiently.~~

~~My shyness pCommunication was a problem that plagued me for years, but my perseverance allowed me to overcome my fear and swallow my pride. I still constantly strive to improve my character and communication skills. Looking back at my younger self, it's hard to believe that I used to be a kid who hid behind her parents. I had a communication problem since I was young, and so this skill is important for me because I managed to overcome something that plagued me for years.~~

The final essay has undergone many drafts and revisions before it is finally ready to be submitted. The final essay is now a compelling piece of the student's application, representing the student well and placing the student at best advantage for admission.

University of California: Prompt #3 – Final

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Although unconventional, my talent, the ability to effectively communicate, is one I worked for years to develop. From a young age, I had trouble speaking to others and expressing my feelings; a social recluse, I wanted to spend time with others but feared their rejection and judgment. But following that shameful incident at the play, I resolved to overcome my fear.

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Just in case you already forget how the first draft looks like, below please find the first and final draft for comparison. Please carefully check them: you will be amazed by how many changes are made in wording, content and structure.

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