



A MEMORABLE PERSONAL STATEMENT IN 8 STEPS

By Shawna-Kaye Lester

WWW.MEMORABLEESSAY.COM

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

All rights reserved. © Memorable Essay® 2018. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, sold or transferred, in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise—without prior written permission from the author, as it is an infringement on copyright.

IS THIS GUIDE FOR YOU?

If you check No. 1 below and any other choice, it sure is!

- ☒ 1. You are applying to graduate school, professional school, or college, and you need to write an application essay.
- ☐ 2. Your essay prompt is an open-ended one such as “Tell Us About Yourself.”
- ☐ 3. You are writing a ‘Why Essay’, you know, “Why this university?” or “Why this program?”
- ☐ 4. You’re not answering an open-ended or “Why” prompt, but you are searching for ideas of what you could write about.
- ☐ 5. You intend to wow admissions with your application, especially with your essay.
- ☐ 6. You are staring at your computer screen, wishing you had guidance to put your many thoughts together into one main message.
- ☐ 7. You’ve started your essay a few times and stopped because you find that you’re blabbing—it’s getting way too long and it’s not coherent.
- ☐ 8. You think your essay is “good enough,” but you want to make it POP.
- ☐ 9. You’re procrastinating on this essay thing, and you want a writing jump-start now.
- ☐ 10 . You are done writing your essay, and you want a framework you can use to critique your work.

Hi there!

I'm Shawna-Kaye. I help ambitious college and graduate school applicants like you stand out in a sea of competition and get into your dream school, so you can use your education to impact the world your way, and create a legacy you're proud of.



→ Since 2007, I have helped over 400 clients win **MORE THAN US\$ 6 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIPS** to top schools around the world.

→ The schools my college-bound clients have gotten into include **Harvard University, Cornell University, Columbia University, MIT, Amherst College, University of Pennsylvania, and Princeton University.**

For the Class of 2022, 75% of my private college consulting clients were admitted to their top-choice college with a partial or fully-funded scholarship.

→ My graduate school clients have cracked the code for schools that include

the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health; Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies; Cornell School of Hotel Administration; NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service; Teachers College, Columbia University; and University of Oxford. Their **SCHOLARSHIP WINS** include *The Consortium Fellowship (NYU Stern School of Business)* and the *Schwarzman Scholars program (Tsinghua University)*.

For the 2017–2018 application season, 75% of my private graduate school admissions consulting clients were admitted to one of their top 2 programs with a partial or full-tuition scholarship.

It feels like not too long ago, I was in your shoes, looking at colleges and grad schools.

In my final year of high school, I ditched my plans of going to med school to attend a liberal arts college, Bates. **Me turning down my med school admission didn't sit well with my mother** (we didn't speak during our long car ride from New York to Maine), but I felt strongly that a broad, world-class undergraduate education was what would make me happy. After graduating and working for a while, **I earned master's degrees from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and Mailman School of Public Health.**

During grad school, I lived in student housing with peers attending universities all across New York. **Word got out that "Shawna-Kaye can help you with your application."** When the demand got too much to be giving away my time, I started to charge for my services. And now, I am thrilled that helping college and grad school applicants like you knock the socks off the admissions committee is my full-time job!

Your dream educational opportunity can radically change what you know, who you

know, and the opportunities you have

access to for the rest of your life. It can be the difference between barely making ends meet for years to come and earning more than what you need. It can be the difference between spending your life doing work you hate, and having a life full of options, freedom, and deep fulfillment.

Your personal statement is an integral ingredient in your journey to your dream school. It is a rare chance for you to speak for yourself and let admissions understand why they need to bring you to campus.

I created this workbook so you could have step-by-step guidance to make yourself unforgettable, and get that email that says,

"Congratulations!"

Good luck to you.

INSTRUCTIONS

It should take you 60 minutes to work through this guide (+30 mins reading time). Block out 90 minutes on your calendar. Ask someone to hold you accountable to completing the guide in 1.5 hours. Set your stopwatch. Commit to not getting up till you're done. Find a quiet place. Record your date and time, and get started. When you're done, share the good news with your accountability partner and me!

START DATE / TIME

END DATE / TIME

1. THE REASON YOU WANT TO GO

Let admissions know why you really want this opportunity.

2. THE REASON YOU ARE WORTHY

Let admissions know you are qualified for this opportunity.

3. YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

Tell admissions what you can bring to campus that no one else can.

4. YOUR MAIN MESSAGE

Fine-tune the core information your personal statement or essay will communicate.

5. IDENTIFY YOUR GEM

Zoom in and expound on your main message.

6. WRITE DOWN YOUR GEM

Use seven tried and proven tools to make your essay memorable.

7. THE OUTLINE

Set yourself up for success with powerful opening and closing paragraphs.

8. POLISH IT

Allot at least a week to write and rewrite your essay.

1

THE REASON *you want to go*

QUICK TIP

Convey your MOTIVATION for liking the school's offerings and wanting to attend. Yes, Economics 201 and Business Club interest you, but *why*? Reveal your *why*.

Why this school? What about this school caught your eye and made you think of applying? What have you been telling everyone you would do if you got in? Why are you interested in the particular field of study you intend to pursue?

Even if you don't know what you will pursue at this university, identify one academic area they focus on that you would spend five minutes learning a bit more about if you had the chance. This is something you are interested in—you should be interested in at least one of their academic and nonacademic offerings, because by applying, you are saying you are willing to invest thousands of dollars and/or years of your life in this school.

One of the easiest ways to show that you are excited about a school, and to make your essay memorable, is to discuss the ways you imagine yourself making use of a specific offering.

List three or four reasons you want this opportunity.

Don't overthink it. (2 minutes)

ACADEMIC OFFERINGS YOU LOVE:

NONACADEMIC OFFERINGS THAT INTEREST YOU:

2

THE REASON

you are worthy

QUICK TIP

Many people want to go to university. Many people will write about why they are deserving, and show how they are a “good fit”. Not you. With your essay, you will show why you are exactly who the university is looking for. Research who they want on campus and why, and show them you are who they desire.

Which of your previous achievements and experiences demonstrate that you are an ideal candidate for this school and your particular program?

Think about the fact that universities seek to enroll students who will excel. These are students who are excited about contributing to campus, and whose presence would be an asset to fellow students, the faculty and administration, and perhaps even the wider off-campus community. Such students are likely to enjoy their university experience, and become generous alumni donors.

Your task then is to convince admissions that you can excel at their school. How do you do this? Showcase ways in which you have already excelled in, and added value to, an academic – or even nonacademic – environment. But remember, you must do this in a way that does not simply rehash your transcript or CV.

List three or four things you have previously achieved or done that show that you are an ideal candidate for this school.

Don't overthink it. (2 minutes)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THAT SHOWS THAT YOU ARE IDEAL:

NONACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN AN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT THAT SHOWS THAT YOU ARE IDEAL:

ACHIEVEMENT IN A NONACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT THAT SHOWS THAT YOU ARE IDEAL:

3

YOUR *unique value proposition*

QUICK TIP

Remember that universities are businesses, even though they are businesses with a special social responsibility. That makes admissions their human resources department. In essays (and interviews), communicate what VALUE you are ready and able to contribute to a university community, not just what you can get.

What unique value will you bring to your dream school?

Universities, especially colleges, are not solely interested in the fact that you deeply desire to enroll and stand to gain personal and professional growth from attending. Anyone can get; what can you alone give to this school?

To be competitive, you need to let schools know that you have a lot to give to your fellow students as well as to the faculty. Here you will be ahead of the game if you have researched the school's offerings, and even the community it is in: Does your dream school have a strong debate society, and do you have experience in doing research for your fellow high school debate club members on one topic in particular? Are you a strong math student who helped improve your little brother's math grades, and does your school run a math workshop for children from the community in which you can volunteer? Does your school run a local prison rehabilitation and reentry program, and do you have administrative skills you want to use to make their program more effective? Did your school's last President's Report say that the institution wants to start doing more research in Scandinavia, and is your research interest in Scandinavia? Does your school want to produce physician-leaders, and do you happen to be a certified leadership trainer? Are you as fascinated by makeup as you are by sea creatures, and you want to help theater and dance students with makeup for their major shows whenever you're not poking oysters under a microscope? The more nuanced and unexpected (but honest and positive) "value" you pick, the more likely it will be that you are the only one of your kind.

List two or three things that you, and only you, can bring to your dream school.

Don't overthink it. (3 minutes)

SPECIALIZED SKILL OR INTEREST YOU HAVE:

UNIQUE AND USEFUL LIFE EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE (FRAMED AND DISCUSSED IN A POSITIVE WAY):

SOCIAL CAUSE, OR UNUSUAL OR UNPOPULAR ACADEMIC TOPIC YOU HAVE A KEEN INTEREST IN:

4

YOUR *main message*

QUICK TIP

Know your MAIN MESSAGE, so you can expound on it. Otherwise, you're driving but with no idea of where you are going, which leads to periods of wandering. You are the driver, and your reader is the passenger. Don't wander with the admissions officer; in the heights of reading season, they don't have time for that.

Summarize your answers from numbers one, two and three into a paragraph of no more than six sentences. This, my friend, is your main message.

This is my favorite step because you are about to make something you can use for a really long time—in your main personal statement or essay, supplemental essays, interviews, emails to your dream school's faculty, and conversations with relatives who think this school costs far too much or is too far away.

Hopefully you can pull off this paragraph easily and with your own writing style, but if not, here is an example:

Summarize your main message.

Don't overthink it. (5 minutes)

MAIN MESSAGE

I would like to attend _____ ,
[NAME OF SCHOOL]

because _____ ,
[REASON 1 YOU WANT TO GO]

[INSERT MOTIVATION FOR REASON 1]

In addition, _____ ,
[REASON 2 YOU WANT TO GO]

[INSERT MOTIVATION FOR REASON 2]

[SOMETHING YOU ACHIEVED IN THE PAST]

[THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PAST ACHIEVEMENT]

so _____ ,
[THE REASON THIS PAST ACHIEVEMENT MAKES YOU WORTHY OF ADMISSION]

[ANOTHER REASON YOU ARE WORTHY OF ADMISSION]

[YOUR MAIN UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION]

and _____ ,
[THE REASON THIS MAKES YOU WORTHY OF ADMISSION]

[ANOTHER UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION]

and _____

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

[HOW THIS UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION CONNECTS TO A BIGGER PICTURE,
SUCH AS CHANGE YOU WANT TO EFFECT IN THE WORLD]

5

Identify YOUR GEM

This chapter is part of the full version.

6

Write down **YOUR GEM**

This chapter is part of the full version.

7

Outline YOUR ESSAY

This chapter is part of the full version.

8

WRITE AND *rewrite* YOUR ESSAY

This chapter is part of the full version.



Hi future university graduate:

Thank you for downloading my tried and proven workbook, **"How to Write a Memorable Personal Statement in 8 Steps."**

Was this helpful to you? If so, encourage a friend who needs it to [get a copy here](#), or share it on social media and tag [@MemorableEssay](#). Share any "Aha!" moments you had while working through it, or ask any questions you still have on [the Memorable Essay Facebook page](#). If there is an area you wish it had covered, please let me know via Facebook, too, and I will give you the best answer I know as soon as I can.

I use many elements in this resource in my one-on-one admissions consulting sessions, so I am sure you are now well equipped to write a memorable essay or personal statement.

"If you're ready to:

- uncover your story
- get into your dream school, and
- have the impact and legacy you want, I would love to meet you."

CLICK HERE AND BOOK A TIME TO CHAT

SHAWNA-KAYE LESTER

College and Graduate School Admissions Consultant
Memorable Essay®



Memorable
essay[®]



WWW.MEMORABLEESSAY.COM