

Style Tips: College Essay

Consider the following ten techniques to add style and voice to your writing.

1. Parallel Construction (essential for good writing; places same parts in same grammatical structure):

Speech and debate enhanced **the depth of my thinking, the incisiveness of my arguments, and the power of my prose.**

(Notice how each part has the same grammatical structure)

2. Subtle repetition (can combine with parallel structure):

Not only did basketball change who I was on the court, **it changed who I was off the court as well.**

(Not only/but also; Just as/just so are the pairs.)

3. Series with an Extra Conjunction. This creates a rhythm and allows each item equal attention. (Only use this with a series of three or more, the goal being to draw the sentence out.):

I stood out as talented **and** funny **and** friendly.

4. Starting with a Coordinating Conjunction (for varying openers):

To some of my friends I am a soccer player and a Sharks fans. **But** to others I am a scholar and a thinker.

(And; Or; So; For; Yet are other options)

5. Series Without a Conjunction (creates a tighter rhythm, can be *powerful*):

He was **cold, brutal, malevolent**—a man I feared from the first day.

6. Semicolons with similar clauses (for main clauses; strengthens connection or contrast):

Katie and Jennifer are both dedicated scholars; **Victoria and Neil are both dedicated talkers.**

7. Colon to emphasize (only comes where there is a *natural pause* before the statement):

My focus has always been on one area: **science.**

8. Dash to emphasize (like the colon, but more informal):

You may think my love of science has meant many a night spent focused on long problem sets—**and it has.** But it's been worth it.

9. Italics for emphasis (the word will then be *read* differently)

10. Short sentence for effect (powerful, dramatic, emphatic)

In the end we had only one goal: to win. **Nothing else mattered.**