

Great Openers for the College Essay

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Strategy 1: Take me there

Put the reader in the situation as if it's happening right now. Relive the experience right now. Use the present tense. Include lots of sensory details. Paint a picture to SHOW (not tell).

Strategy 2: Get me wondering

Give the reader a reason to read on. Create some mystery so the reader is hooked into your essay.

Strategy 3: Make it interesting with a quote or facts

Draw the reader in with a quote that's related to your essay, or with impressive facts related to your essay.

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Here are a few samples from the Australia essay.

Strategy 1: Take me there

Put the reader in the situation as if it's happening right now. Relive the experience right now. Use the present tense. Include lots of sensory details. Paint a picture to SHOW (not tell).

High above the vast, beautiful continent of Australia, I'm situated in a teetering basket, tethered to a huge balloon above me. To my right, kangaroos leap across green fields, a flock of white cockatiels fly from a tree to my left, and off in the distance I see the sparkling blue of the Great Barrier Reef. As I take in all this beauty, I can't help but feel intense pride that I, alone, was responsible for getting half way around the world to take in these magnificent miracles.

Strategy 2: Get me wondering

Give the reader a reason to read on. Create some mystery so the reader is hooked into your essay.

I had already seen the morning sun over 9,000 times by the time I saw the sun rise on this July morning. But this morning was different. I was on a new hemisphere, on a tall mountain surrounded by exotic animals, and I was witnessing the start of a day my far-away family wouldn't see for more than twelve hours. In Australia, during the summer of 2011, I was witnessing a sunrise, and basking in the glow of my independence.

Strategy 3: Make it interesting with a quote or facts

Draw the reader in with a quote that's related to your essay, or with impressive facts related to your essay.

There are 15,886 miles between Pottersville, New Jersey and Brisbane, Australia. I went literally half way across the globe to vacation in Australia during the summer of 2011. In this completely different world I saw beautiful sights and made friends with incredibly friendly "strangers," but my favorite souvenir from this trip was my pride in having gone so far all by myself.