



2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## 5 Features of Successful College Essay Workshops

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#HECA2019RI



# Overview

- Recognize which elements work in a group.
- Identify strengths as a presenter and marketer.
- Become familiar with a basic curriculum.
- Understand how to develop your workshop.

# Five Features

- Clear objectives
- Focused marketing
- Solid curriculum
- Strong presentation Skills
- Time to prepare and follow up

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# Workshop Types

Type	Details	Purpose	Considerations
<b>Pro-Bono Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay overview</li> <li>• Common App nuts &amp; bolts</li> <li>• Essay kick-off</li> <li>• 60 – 90 minutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goodwill</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Promotion</li> <li>• Value to you</li> <li>• What happens afterwards?</li> </ul>
<b>Client Kick-Off</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 – 2 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Pricing</li> </ul>
<b>Client Essay Work Session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 – 4 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Value-add to clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Pricing</li> <li>• Staffing</li> </ul>
<b>Standalone Workshop</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients only</li> <li>• Non-clients/blend</li> <li>• 3 – 4 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Value-add to clients</li> <li>• Gain new clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• Promotion</li> <li>• Pricing</li> </ul>
<b>Pro-Bono Workshop - School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of school boot camp</li> <li>• 3 hours – 2 days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goodwill</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value to you</li> <li>• Integration w/counselors, teachers, etc.</li> <li>• What happens afterwards?</li> </ul>
<b>Standalone Multi-Day Workshop</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients only</li> <li>• Non-clients/blend</li> <li>• 2 – 5 days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Value-add to clients</li> <li>• Gain new clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Promotion</li> <li>• Pricing</li> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• Do you have skills &amp; stamina?</li> <li>• What happens afterwards?</li> </ul>

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# What Works in a Group?

- Overview
- Context
- Audience
- Voice
- Understanding the Prompt
- Generating Potential Topics



# How to Use Wow's Curriculum

- Leader's Guide
- Student Materials
- Based on the Wow Method

# Curriculum & Handouts

- Get the curriculum and handouts
- Send an email to [susan@wowwritingworkshop.com](mailto:susan@wowwritingworkshop.com)
- Subject line: HECA Workshops

# Description & Objectives (p2)

## Workshop Description

Students will learn how to turn everyday experiences into compelling stories that will help them catch the attention of admissions counselors. College Essay Boot Camp takes students through Steps 1-4 of the ten-step Wow Method.

## Objectives

At the conclusion of the three-hour workshop, students will:

- Understand the concept of “knowing your audience”
- Understand the concept that “an application essay is a story about you”
- Understand that every writer has a unique writing voice
- Explore experiences to write about in an application essay, and choose a topic
- Understand the importance of details
- Have a theme for one essay and understand that a theme has two parts: 1) What happened? and 2) Why does it matter?
- Understand that they are not writing about a static topic; rather, they are writing about an experience (what happened?) and what they learned/*gained* from it (why does it matter?)

## Time Commitment

- 3 hours

## Student Materials

- Students should come to the workshop prepared to write. They will need paper and a pen. A laptop or tablet is optional.

## Instructor Preparation

Review all instructions and handouts. Please note that instructions include suggested language. Make the key points using your own words.

- The purpose of this workshop is to teach young people to tell their own stories in their own voices, and to do so as clearly and effectively as possible.
- For this reason, the curriculum intentionally does not include any full sample essays. If students are interested in sample essays, they can find them online or in books. However, we discourage them from using any samples they find as models for their own work. Everyone's voice is unique. There is no formula for writing the “right” type of essay.

## Bring These Items to the Workshop

- Enough copies of all handouts for your students
- Pens
- Lined paper

# Welcome - Discussion (p4)

## Welcome

10 minutes

Distribute Handout packet as students enter the room.

Ask them to complete page 1: Reflect on Your Experiences as they sit down.

Introduce **yourself** when everyone has arrived.

- Name (and what they should call you)
- Any relevant professional/personal experience
- What you like about college application essays
- Why you think writing is important

Allow 5-10 minutes for students to complete handout.

Facilitate discussion

- Ask a few students to share answers to one of the questions (every student should not answer every question.)
- Comment briefly on the responses.
- Make sure everyone can easily follow the fill-in-the-blank format (Experience X was important because...) You will refer back to this when you discuss Step 3 (Focus on Theme) later in the workshop.

Introduce concept of "theme"

- In very general terms, introduce the idea that a personal statement needs a theme.
- Most likely, their responses to the "Who Am I?" questions focused primarily on "what happened" and did not go into "why it matters." For now, that is fine. Later they will learn to ensure that their essays include both aspects.
- **Note to instructor:** This concept will be modified for other types of essays; today you are focusing on personal statements. (e.g., a "Why College X" essay does not have the same type of theme as a personal statement, although the concept of theme is still relevant.)

# Intro/Voice - Exercise (p5)

## Introduction: Finding Your Voice

10 minutes

### Transition

- Before we talk about what makes a good essay, we are going to complete a writing exercise that has nothing (and everything!) to do with personal statements.
- You have a unique voice, and a personal statement offers a valuable opportunity to showcase it.

### Discuss the concept of voice

- Note that this is one of the most important things you will discuss in this workshop.
- Talk about the elements of a speaking voice (tone, volume, word choice, etc.)
- Ask what makes a "writing voice." Answers should include:
  - Word choice
  - Images
  - Details
  - Sentence structure

### Voice exercise

- Ask student to take out something to write with. They will each need 1 or 2 blank sheets of paper or a laptop/tablet.
- Explain the rules:
  - This is a journaling activity.
  - Think about your morning (THIS MORNING – not "mornings" in general.)
  - What happened to you from the moment you opened your eyes? What did you see, hear, smell, feel. (Not "breakfast," but "vanilla Dannon yogurt that I ate in the car with a plastic spoon.")
  - Write as fast as you can.
  - Don't try to be creative. Just write.
  - Don't worry about making sense.
  - No crossing out or correcting what you write. JUST WRITE!
  - Don't think about writing in full sentences. Just scribble down whatever comes to mind - images, fragments, sights, smells, tastes, sounds, textures, memories, associations.
  - Do not pick up your pen. If you get stuck, keep going. List whatever comes to mind when you recall that moment/experience.

# Timing Options

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- 1 Hour (intro to the college essay)
- 2 Hours (stop after Step 2 to discuss topics with students)
- 3 Hours (if you won't be seeing students again)
- 1 Day (2-hour session, plus time for individual brainstorm discussions; then continue with Step 3 to the end)
- 1 Week (1-day session, plus time to draft and revise at least one essay)

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# WOW



WRITING WORKSHOP

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