

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?

I am a paddler. Specifically, I'm a paddler on Mountain View Dragon Boat. I'm proud of my ability to paddle because it's not something that many people know how to do well, and what I have gone through to get where I am today in the sport made me grow and change as an individual.

When I first started the sport, I was an extremely timid and unconfident teenager who was only joining because she didn't make it onto the badminton team. Despite not knowing anyone, I attended practice consistently, even more than some of the veterans on the team did. I finally raced at my first race at Alameda Point in the summer, and my team gave an outstanding performance! Despite many of the team members not consistently coming out to practice, both of the boats that were sent out placed; one placed second and another placed third, and we received plaques to commemorate the occasion. This race gave me more confidence in both my paddling abilities and in myself.

After my first race, I began to grow more comfortable with the people on the team. Before, I would either keep to myself or I would talk to only one or two people. But at my first race, I was given the chance to properly connect with my teammates, and so I did. I talked to many of them for the first time, I played games with them while we were waiting for our heat to begin, and I fought hard with them for third place. As cheesy as this sounds, this race was the beginning of a new me, the moment that marked the point where I began to break out of my shell. I kept consistently going to practice and began to talk to my peers more; I further bonded with them when we all gathered at the beach to send the seniors on the team off. I got the

award, "Most Committed" at the beach event and receiving this award made me feel that I was finally a part of the team.

Dragon boat has allowed me to create bonds that I've never made before and become part of a loving, supportive family. The sport has also allowed to come out of my shell as a more confident, outgoing person and I've used this newfound strength to try to recruit other people onto the team and to make them feel at home. The sport has also given me a chance to assume a leadership role; I successfully ran for the position of treasurer of the Dragon Boat Club at school.

On the flip side, the sport has also brought me excruciating disappointment after a huge loss at my second race. This loss was a wake up call that galvanized me into action and motivated me to do things outside of practice that would benefit me as a paddler. Although I may not be the best paddler and have not yet won any medals, the trials and tribulations I have gone through to become the paddler I am today is what makes my ability to paddle an extremely important skill to me.

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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Comment [A1]: Direct opening grabs the reader's attention.

Comment [A2]: However, this next sentence seems to detract from the effect of the first sentence. Find another way to introduce the fact at a later point in the essay.

Comment [A3]: Use more precise wording and impactful language

Comment [A4]: word choice

Comment [A5]: show, not tell

Comment [A6]: good details- discuss feelings around this decision

Comment [A7]: provide specifics in order to show the comparison

Comment [A8]: How did you feel going into the race?

Comment [A9]: Explain how the team could have performed well if the team did not consistently practice. Also discuss what qualifies as an outstanding performance.

Comment [A10]: Show some imagery about the race. Paint it so the reader can see the excitement and feel the accomplishment.

Comment [A11]: Describe your interactions. Use dialogue or imagery to show the scene.

Comment [A12]: How did you "connect"?

Comment [A13]: Use proper nouns - state the names of your teammates and the games you played. Be specific.

Comment [A14]: Avoid cliches like "break out of my shell"

Comment [A15]: Would like to see a montage here to build up to this point

award, "Most Committed" at the beach event and receiving this award made me feel that I was finally a part of the team.

Dragon boat has allowed me to create bonds that I've never made before and become part of a loving, supportive family. The sport has also allowed to come out of my shell as a more confident, outgoing person and I've used this newfound strength to try to recruit other people onto the team and to make them feel at home. The sport has also given me a chance to assume a leadership role; I successfully ran for the position of treasurer of the Dragon Boat Club at school.

On the flip side, the sport has also brought me excruciating disappointment after a huge loss at my second race. This loss was a wake up call that galvanized me into action and motivated me to do things outside of practice that would benefit me as a paddler. Although I may not be the best paddler and have not yet won any medals, the trials and tribulations I have gone through to become the paddler I am today is what makes my ability to paddle an extremely important skill to me.

Comment [A16]: This assertion would benefit from specific details. What makes the other dragonboaters your "loving, supportive family"? Show the different ways in which they have encouraged you or helped you build your skills and feel at home on the team.

Comment [A17]: word choice is repetitive here and cliché

Comment [A18]: Show your recruitment efforts.

Comment [A19]: What does this role entail and why did you decide to run for this particular position?

Comment [A20]: Strange jump in topic. Devise a smoother transition or re-organize the essay so that this part of the essay flows into another more logically.

Comment [A21]: Be specific about "trials and tribulations" - these weren't really demonstrated here in the essay. Showing how you overcame them would be a great way to demonstrate your tenacity and resilience to the admissions reader.

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

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

_____ I am a paddler. At Alameda Point, my teammates and I crouch low into the strong headwind, as the freezing water splashes into our faces, the saltwater burning my contacts. As we edged past [boat we beat] into 2nd place by less than a tenth of a second, our cheers erupt. Earlier heats in the Sprint Race had dented my confidence, but in this race, Mountain View Dragon Boat proved itself the strongest high school team on the water.

_____ Specifically, I'm a paddler on Mountain View Dragon Boat. I'm proud of my ability to paddle because it's an uncommon skill that I've worked hard to hone, and my commitment to the sport has helped me to not something that many people know how to do well, and what I have gone through to get where I am today in the sport made me grow and change as an individual.

When my friend Harley invited me to join the team, I reluctantly agreed, in part because I'd just been cut from the badminton team. Despite my ~~I first started the sport, I was an extremely shyness and lack of confidence, I timid and unconfident teenager who was only joining because she didn't make it onto the badminton team. Despite not knowing anyone,~~ I attended practice consistently, even more than some team of the veterans on the team did. [images of practice here] In my f ~~finally raced at my first race at Alameda Point race, MVDB in the summer, and my team~~ gave an outstanding performance! Both A and B boat teams placed, Despite many of the team members not consistently coming out to practice, both of the boats that were sent out placed; one placed second and another placed third respectively; the ~~and we received~~ plaques to commemorate ~~the occasion and my teammates' encouragement. This race~~ gave me more confidence in both my paddling abilities and in myself.

After ~~that first race, my first race,~~ I began to grow more comfortable with ~~instead of~~ the people on the team. Before, I would either ~~keeping~~ to myself, or I ~~connected more to~~ would talk to only one or two people. But at my first race, I was given the chance to properly connect with my teammates, and so I did. I talked to many of them for the first time, I ~~played~~ played poker games with them while ~~we were~~ waiting for our heats to begin and [other bonding here]. ~~and~~ [My bond makes me want to work harder to not let down my new friends/family]. At the Senior Send-off, I won the ~~I fought hard with them for third~~ place. ~~As cheesy as this sounds, this race was the beginning of a new me, the moment that marked the point where I began to break out of my shell. I kept consistently going to practice and began to talk to my peers more; I further bonded with them when we all gathered at the beach to send the seniors on the team off. I got the award, "Most Committed" award, [at the beach event and~~ receiving this award made me feel that I was finally a part of the team.]

MVDB has become a loving, suDragon boat has allowed me to create bonds that I've never made before and become part of a loving, supportive family. They pulled me sport has also allowed to come out of from my shell; as a more confident, outgoing person, and I've used this newfound strength to try to recruit ad welcome other people onto the team and to the team and to make them feel at home. The sport has also given me a chance to assume a leadership roles; I successfully ran for and serve as my school's the position of treasurer of the Dragon Boat Club Treasurer at school.

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336/526w

Save:

As cheesy as this sounds, this race was the beginning of a new me, the moment that marked the point where I began to break out of my shell. I kept consistently going to practice and began to talk to my peers more; Harley Alameda Point, strong headwind, crouch low, the water splashed into our faces, the saltwater burns my contact, earned 2nd place by less than a tenth of a second, in earlier heats dented my confidence, strongest high school team, Treasure Island Dragon Boat Festival short four paddlers, A and B boats, bonded, Sean coach and then slipped into the water but he was wearing a life vest, On the flip side, the sport has also brought me excruciating disappointment after a huge loss at my second race. This loss was a wake up call that galvanized me into action and motivated me to do things outside of practice that would benefit me as a paddler, is what makes my ability to paddle an extremely important skill to me.

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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I began connecting more with my teammates, playing poker or dancing to music while waiting for our races. My love for my new family motivates me to work hard so that I won't disappoint them, a commitment they honored at the Senior Send-off, where I won the "Most Committed" award.

My new MVDB family has pulled me from my shell, and as a more outgoing person, I've used this newfound strength to recruit and welcome other people to the team and to assume leadership roles: I successfully ran for and serve as my school's Dragon Boat Club Treasurer.

The trials and tribulations I experienced created the paddler I am today, and no other sport could have made me grow like dragon boat has.

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

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