

Reader Question: How Long Is Too Long For Written Application?

Description

Here's a question from a blog reader:

I would love to know what we should be aiming for in essay length. What's considered average? How long is too long? Etc. I would hate to ruin my child's chances by overwriting, but I don't want to short change him either. Any advice would be appreciated!

Thanks!!

[September 12, 2010 7:33 PM](#) 

Here is Kim Hamer's response:

How long is too long for the written application is a good question!

Instead of focusing on the length, it's really about focusing on the content of your private elementary school application. Specific, detailed applications are never too long. As a parent you really want the school to know who your family is and who your child is, right? The problem is talking about your child is usually a parent's favorite subject which means, we can drone on and on about our kids, causing a too long application. You've met that same person at a party! This person continues to talk and talk and talk while not saying anything of interest and not providing details that you can relate to. Unfortunately, that is how many private school applications read. Here are two ways to help you avoid the droning and over long application.

1. Make Sure You Are Answering The Question And Be Specific.

Many parents make the mistake of NOT answering the question! This usually happens because they're so worried about not giving a good description of their child, they over describe him. They also use meaningless descriptions like happy, nice, funny. To avoid this mistake, while you re-read your answer keep the question in mind. Use words that really show who your child is. The more specific you are about your child, the less you have to say!

2. Show The School Who Your Child Is, Don't Tell Them

Another way that essays become too long is that parents often *tell* the school about their child, about their family or why they should be a part of the school. The most effective way to get this point across is to *show* the school your child, family etc. For instance in our essay about our youngest son, we wrote, "When Ezra is in a group he tries to make sure that everyone else in the group gets to talk." I could have written "Ezra is a leader." While that sentence is shorter, the longer one speaks volumes! It demonstrates how my child behaves, it shows what we think an important leadership attribute is. It also speaks to our values, that being a leader is important. I just showed them in one sentence who my child is and what we value. I now no longer need to state, or tell the school. Show Your Family!

Remember, an admissions director in Los Angeles has to read over 100 applications. An essay that takes up a lot of their time, that uses none interesting or detailed words for them is like listening to the person at the party. You just want to get out of there. An essay that is pointed and clear, which means it will not be over-written or over long, will get you noticed and closer to getting you in to the school of your choice!

Kim Hamer is the founder of "Get Into Private School" an education consulting firm in Los Angeles. Kim is no longer working in consulting, but has moved on to a job fundraising for schools.

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1. Kim Hamer and how long should a private school essay be?

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Author

admin

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