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Tips from an editor on answering the UC personal insight questions

One of the most important (and, admittedly, challenging) parts of the [University of California admission application](#) is writing your responses to the [personal insight questions](#). Admissions evaluators want to learn more about you, and while it's not always easy to write about yourself, this is your opportunity to have your unique voice heard. To help ease you through it, here are some tips to keep in mind while you're writing.

No time like the present

If you haven't started already, try to work your responses soon. You have until Nov. 30 to submit your UC application, but if you rush, you might make mistakes. Use any downtime you have to work on the questions, and remember to take short breaks.

Remember your audience

Keep in mind that if you apply for admission to more than one UC campus, evaluators from each school will read your responses. Don't make your answers so specific to each campus that it leaves the others wanting more.

Plain text is best

Even though you will submit your responses through the online application, it's better to write them in Microsoft Word, Google Docs or even your notes app, then copy and paste the plain text into the application. It will be easier to make corrections and for other people to review your drafts as you go.

Your first draft doesn't have to be perfect

Try not to focus on impressing the people who will read your responses. If you have anxiety over what he or she will think, your originality and unique voice will be lost and you risk procrastinating in the pursuit of perfection. Be confident and write responses that you think are the best reflection of you, then take a break (or even sleep on it) and go back and edit them until they're error-free.

Keep the focus on yourself

Write in the first person. Many students tend to write about their family members and friends, and although they might be huge supporters, this essay is about you, not them. Admissions evaluators want to read about you, so use "I" statements when you write. It makes it more personal.

Say it in fewer words

Your space is limited, so try not to use words you don't need. Some examples of unnecessary words are "very," "that" and "both." Try to avoid too many "-ing" words. For example, "I was running" is better as "I ran." "It is important to remember" should just be "Remember."

Keep it professional

Watch your grammar. Don't use slang or make puns, don't abbreviate words and don't use acronyms. Avoid using shortcuts you would use while texting, and don't ever use hashtags.

Recite sentences in reverse

When you're ready to edit, read your sentences out loud to make sure they make sense and flow. One thing editors do is read sentences backwards. It sounds bizarre, but it works!

Print it out and proofread

Run spellcheck, print it out and proof what you wrote. You will be surprised at how many things you can catch just by looking at a physical copy.

Get a second (and third) opinion

Have someone proofread what you wrote before you submit it. Getting another pair of eyes to look at it after you've been staring at it forever will help catch more errors than you might think.

Good luck!

While this might seem overwhelming, rest assured that the UC personal insight questions are only one factor that Admissions evaluators consider. Your responses can give them more insight into the information you provided on your application.

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