

COLLEGE ESSAYS · SCORECARD

Personal Statement Scorecard

Five categories, two points each, ten points total. Score a draft, find the lowest categories, and the next revision priority is clear.

2 — Ready

1 — Getting there

0 — Not yet

Voice & Specificity	Insight & Reflection	Structure & Momentum	Craft & Polish	The Only-You Test
Does this sound like one particular student, in concrete detail?	Does the essay show how the student thinks, not just what happened?	Does every paragraph pull the reader forward?	Is the writing clean, economical, and within the word limit?	Could any other applicant have written this essay?
2 · READY The essay sounds like the student talking, and the details are concrete enough that no one else could borrow them.	2 · READY The reflection does real work: it shows what the student noticed, questioned, or changed their mind about.	2 · READY The opening earns attention honestly, each paragraph moves the essay forward, and the ending lands without restating.	2 · READY Sentences are clean and economical, mechanics are sound, and the essay fits its word limit with nothing wasted.	2 · READY No other applicant could have written it. The topic, angle, and details are this student's alone.
1 · GETTING THERE The voice comes through in places, but general statements or borrowed phrasing still carry parts of the essay.	1 · GETTING THERE Reflection is present but stays near the surface — a stated lesson rather than visible thinking.	1 · GETTING THERE The shape is workable, but momentum stalls — a slow start, a detour, or an ending that summarizes.	1 · GETTING THERE The writing is solid but carries extra words, repeated ideas, or a few mechanical slips.	1 · GETTING THERE The topic is common, but the angle and details are starting to make it the student's own.
0 · NOT YET Sentiment stands in for detail. Most sentences could appear in anyone's essay.	0 · NOT YET The essay recounts events without showing what the student made of them.	0 · NOT YET The essay reads as a list of events, or wanders without a clear arc.	0 · NOT YET Wordiness or errors distract from the story.	0 · NOT YET Another student could submit this essay with a few names changed.
SCORE ____ / 2	SCORE ____ / 2	SCORE ____ / 2	SCORE ____ / 2	SCORE ____ / 2

TOTAL ____ / 10	9–10 Ready to submit	6–8 Close	3–5 Working draft	0–2 Early draft
	A final read-aloud and one last mechanics check.	One focused revision pass on the lowest-scoring category is the next move.	The material is there. Revise toward the two lowest categories — not the whole essay at once.	Revisit the story choice before polishing sentences. The right topic fixes more than any line edit.