

#5: The most important moment in my life was the big game that my team won (or lost).

Yawn. This is a bad idea because it's boring, and the lessons learned are typically the same regardless of who writes it. The importance of sportsmanship coupled with the joy of being part of a team. How much it meant to win or how much you enjoyed the experience even though you didn't win.

One of the primary goals of [the essay](#) is to help your application stand out. Don't blow it by writing about something so common. Either find a more interesting angle on athletics or find a new topic.

#4: Behold all of my successes, aka The List.

Most applications include a place where you will record all of your [activities, honors and awards](#). The essay is not that place.

Instead of trying to cover everything you have ever accomplished within the confines of 500 words, pick one important achievement and focus on that. What sparked your interest in that activity? Why do you do it and what do you enjoy most about it? Does it relate to your future goals and, if so, in what way?

#3: One night I volunteered at a soup kitchen and it changed my life.

Otherwise known as the essay where you tell the admissions people what a great person you are. With three exceptions — yes, three — every single essay I have read about [volunteer work](#) came to one of the following conclusions: I never realized how much I had until I met people who didn't have anything; I never realized anyone could be happy without the things I take for granted; or a combination of the previous two.

You might think that admissions officers want to hear about what a great person you are, but in reality they want to hear about the person you are. Writing about a passion or true interest will always result in a more genuine and impactful essay.

#2: I am a can of seltzer.

This topic probably seems much more unique than the soup kitchen essay. Not everyone is comparing themselves to a bottle of soda — I'm fizzy! — right? Well, there's a good reason for that: It's an awful idea.

Admissions officers respond to authenticity. Focus on what's real rather than on a "creative" idea that amounts to a gimmick. If you can find a more personal story, one that shares something important about who you are, your readers will feel like they know you much better when they're done.

#1: Here I am writing my college essay (which, did you know, is really hard?!), and there you are, reading it.

