

College Essays – 30 Min Essay Tuning

Each Group Needs:

1. Groups of 4
2. Tables pulled together
3. A timekeeper with military precision, a take-no-prisoners attitude, no sense of humor.
4. Multiple copies of each piece of student work (each member will get one)

Authors Need: Their college essay, pen/pencil, lined paper for note taking

Tuners Need: Pen/pencil, highlighter, copy of author's paper, sensitivity, sense of decency

Each group will have exactly 23 minutes to review each paper. Timekeepers must move us along quickly in order for a group of 3 to finish in 70 minutes or so.

College Essay Critique Process

Reading (7 minutes)

1. **Tuners-** *Read and annotate college essay. As an option, consider the author reading the essay aloud to the tuners. Look for the following:*
 - a. Presentation of content, and structure of argument, evidence, thesis.
 - b. Is the author exercising careful choice of colorful verbs and adjectives?
 - c. Your favorite sentence. Why, specifically, is it your favorite?
 - d. To what extent does the essay answer the prompt?
 - e. Make any quick/easy grammar corrections you can on their paper
 - f. Jot down clarifying questions and suggestions you have for the author
2. **Author-** *Brainstorm a focus question or area of concern. This question point to an area of concern for you in your writing. See examples to the right, or pull from the list on the docs page of my DP:*

Focus Question Examples, CEBC

- * Do I answer the prompt?
- * Is it too cheesy, am I selling myself too hard?
- * Does my essay make me sound interesting, but not too conceited?

Intro and Focus Question (1 min)

1. *Author explains their general thesis, or approach to the prompt in their own words, followed by his/her focusing question*
2. Tuners- SILENCE! - Dialogue is unproductive at this point.
3. After the Author has explained their approach, tuners may ask clarifying questions (NOT suggestions, not leading questions – clarification only)

Tuners – Get Tuning! (8 min)

1. **Favorite Sentence Discussion.** Tuners will discuss their favorite sentence by the author. Why favorite? Tuners will come to a consensus, and send a tuner to write that sentence on the whiteboard.
2. Tuners- In turns, each tuner must discuss their thoughts on writing, suggestions for revision (content and structure, address focus question)
3. Tuners review rubric, discussing specific strengths/areas for growth. Where would this essay fall on the rubric and why?
4. Author- SILENT, taking notes

Reflection and Discussion (5 minutes)

1. Author speaks to comments/questions while participants are silent. This is not the time to defend yourself or your work, but to reflect aloud on the ideas or questions that seemed particularly interesting and/or helpful.
2. Group discussion: Tuners- Once the author has finished reflecting, encourage a discussion with the author –
 - a. What are the strengths of the essay?
 - b. Where are the specific areas that require refinement?
 - c. How can the author make more of their essay like the “favorite” sentence?

Procedural Debrief (2 min)

1. Debrief of ideas for improvement of the analysis (do any of the times need to be lengthened, shortened? What were really productive moments of the session? In what spots were we unproductive? How can we tighten the protocol for next time?)
2. Repeat procedure until all essays have been revised and edited.
3. Finished with all of your papers? Gather your feedback and get revising!