

THE FOUR-GATE COLLEGE ESSAY CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

GATE 1 — VOICE & PURPOSE

Goal: a personal statement that sounds like one person thinking aloud with care.

- ☐ My essay shares who I am and what I care about.
- ☐ The introduction sets a clear point and a one-line thesis statement.
- ☐ I picked specific examples that show judgment, not slogans.
- ☐ The middle carries the story and the analysis, not summary.
- ☐ Each paragraph advances one idea that serves the thesis.
- ☐ My perspective stays mine rather than echoing recommendation letters.
- ☐ I can name the important part of my life this piece reveals.
- ☐ I wrote it for an admissions officer with limited time and sharp focus.

Note: _____



GATE 2 — EVIDENCE & SHAPE

Goal: details that hold weight and a form the reader can follow.

☐ I answered the full essay prompt.

Prompt: _____

My answer, part by part: _____

☐ A short outline exists before the draft.

☐ Specific examples sit beside reflection that explains cause and effect.

☐ I describe concrete actions, not traits. I explain what changed.

☐ The word count sits near the word limit without spilling over.

☐ Every sentence earns space on the page. Fluff is gone.

☐ If multiple pieces are required, the portfolio shows range across qualities, courses, and roles.

Note: _____

GATE 3 — FIT & ACCURACY

Goal: precision about colleges, programs, and the whole application process.

☐ I checked every school name, center, course, and program reference.

☐ If I reused an essay, all college references match the target university.

☐ The piece shows how I would contribute rather than only praise.

☐ My file hangs together: personal statement, supplements, short answers, and test scores form one picture for the admissions committee.

☐ No repeated stories across pieces. New angle, new examples, new details.

☐ Any mention of a writing center, lab, or education resource connects to how I will access it and use it.

Note: _____





GATE 4 — POLISH & SUBMISSION

Goal: a clean final draft that stands up to careful reading.

- ☐ Style stays consistent: tense, contractions, acronyms.
- ☐ Grammar is clean. I read the paper aloud and fixed rough spots.
- ☐ Punctuation supports meaning. Awkward glue words are trimmed.
- ☐ Formatting meets the portal's rules.
- ☐ Two outside readers gave feedback:
- ☐ Reader who knows me well: _____
- ☐ Reader who knows writing well: _____
- ☐ I revised with their strongest notes while keeping my voice.
- ☐ File name is clear. Upload completed without errors.

Note: _____



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