

Writing a Transfer Essay

Transferring to a different university can be a stressful process. The transfer essay, which is usually 500-words, is one of the most important features of your transfer application. The essay is your chance to show an admissions officer their school is the right fit for you.

Transfer essays are different than the original application essay you wrote to be accepted in the first place; transfer essays are more focused on:

- 1) how you have grown from your time at your current university and
- 2) your specific goals for your future at your new university.

Since there are much fewer transfer students than freshman applicants, admissions officers often have more time to devote to each application. This is why it is very important for your transfer essay to convey thoughtful reasons for transfer and to pay close attention to detail. This handout offers some helpful strategies to writing a persuasive transfer essay – and offers some common pitfalls to avoid.

Do:

- **Explain some specific goals you hope to achieve** at the new university. What is the specific major you hope to undertake? Do you want to work with a prominent professor in that department? Is there a class you find very interesting that you want to take? Focus on the future.
- **Mention how you have benefitted from your old university**, in terms of education and growth. You may have absolutely hated it, but it is important that you show the admission's officer how you have learned from your experience.
- **Talk about specific academic features of the college** that you are excited to take part in. Are you interested in a particular program or professor? A specific facility?

Don't:

- **Trash-talk your old university**, or sound bitter about your experiences there.
- **Make excuses** for why you might have gotten bad grades at your old university. Many transfer students have weaker academic records, whether because their social life negatively affected their academic performance or because they got stuck in a major they were no longer interested in. Focus instead on the future.
- **Give reasons for transferring that do not have academic motivations**, or can be construed as trivial. For example, because you are homesick, your original university was too hard, you want to be closer to your significant other, etc.

Below are some examples that can help you understand how these Do's and Don'ts look in practice.

Essay Prompt: Please provide a statement that addresses your reasons for transferring and the objectives you hope to achieve.

BAD

The time I have spent at Gotham University in unsatisfying writing classes has led me to my true passion: computer science. Though GU was once my dream school, and my educational field originally English, my time in the campus computer club has inspired me to become more involved in computer science. Carnegie Mellon's computer science program is ranked very highly in the field, which will help me be a great programmer. At Gotham University, my class sizes were too large and I felt like my professors did not care about me as a student. As a result, my grades were very poor and do not reflect my passion for learning. At CMU the class sizes will be smaller, and I will take the necessary initiative to form lasting relationships with my professors. I wish I had applied to Carnegie Mellon from the start, and gotten ahead on my education and career. Now that I know my passion, I am ready to be an enthusiastic and prosperous student at Carnegie Mellon.

Fails to cite specific reasons for wanting to attend CMU
Asserts negative claim
Attempts to explain poor grades
Does not focus on the future

GOOD

I am eager to gain a sophisticated understanding of computer science conventions, as well as Artificial Intelligence technology, at the Carnegie Mellon School of Computer Science. From numerous and cutting edge computer labs to professional leaders in research like Professor Scott Fahlman, there are opportunities that will allow me to achieve my research goals at Carnegie Mellon that would be otherwise unavailable. Specifically, I want to help construct search and inference interfaces that mimic human recall, and help make such interfaces a commonplace feature of modern technology, like Professor Fahlman's work with the Scone program. Although my previous university did not have CMU's range of courses or the focus on AI, my faculty there did impart to me the value of risk-taking research, from their exploratory work on cryptography. CMU embodies this value by funding research that pushes the boundaries of Artificial Intelligence technology. I look forward to collaborating directly with my professors on their AI research, and working towards being a critical and valuable member of Carnegie Mellon's computer science community.

Focuses on the future
Provides specific reasons for wanting to enroll at CMU
Cites a specific academic goal
Highlights values of the department
Focuses on the future