Tips for Writing the Co-op Application Essay

Carefully write a 3-to-5 paragraph essay to highlight your particular abilities and interests. Read the prompt closely and answer every point in a concise manner. One paragraph essays or those with poor grammar are quickly weeded out by recruiters.

A 3-to-5 paragraph essay typically starts with an introductory paragraph, which gives a brief outline of what will be discussed. Then proceed with one to three paragraphs that form the body of your essay. Start with your strongest statement in the body’s first paragraph. Give examples of key statements in each part of the body. Your concluding paragraph should summarize the essay, perhaps making a reference back to the introduction.

Shape How You Describe Yourself

- Draw the reader in with a strong opening statement. Your application is one of many, and this will help you stand out in the applicant pool.
- Do not just state that you want practical experience; that’s obvious – be specific.
- Emphasize what’s unique about you. For example: classes you’ve taken, professors you’ve worked with, or events you’ve attended. Highlight projects, volunteer positions, jobs, or experiences that relate to your goals.
- What do you think is the most interesting or notable thing about you? How do you think it might relate to the company that you want to work for?
- What do you plan to do with the education/experience you hope to receive?
- Demonstrate that you have a realistic sense of the field and the training required. Provide examples of how you’ve prepared yourself for this field. (For example, how you conducted research, volunteer work, or related personal experiences.)
- Even if you are not sure what area of engineering you want to focus on, at least mention your areas of interest. What makes you and your interests a good fit?
- Say what the program will gain by accepting you.
- Keep it positive. Do not explain shortcomings in your background or application, or poor grades. That would highlight negatives, which you want to avoid.

Tone and Writing Style

- Come across as genuine, realistic, unique, and enthusiastic.
- Avoid writing vague or generic-sounding statements; they’re ineffective. Instead use concrete details.
- Avoid romanticizing your plans. Talk about realistic ways you can contribute to the field.
- Avoid meaningless clichés such as “I’ve always wanted to...” or “I like to help people.”
- Use different sentence structures in your essay. Avoid beginning every sentence with “I.”
- Avoid casual language, use professional wording. For example, instead of writing that you want to “get my hands dirty” use “apply skills and knowledge.”

Final Check

- Edit and proofread your essay. Are you communicating exactly what you want to say?
- Does it look professional and well written? Look at grammar, font size, aesthetics, spelling, and format. Don’t forget this is also a writing sample.
- Have someone else proofread the final version for typos, content, and grammatical errors.