**The College Essay Cheat Sheet—Steps 8-10**



**Step 8—The Third Draft**

* Less is more. Don’t go overboard with the metaphors and use active voice (subject doing the action).
* Avoid exclamation points. Use them only for commands or yelling “Fire!”
* Reserve dialogue for important moments, not to bring your story along. Keep it short and vary your voices.
* Avoid repetition of words.
* Go easy on the adjectives. Stop using the thesaurus.
* Watch your pronouns, does your reader know who you are referring to?
* Don’t dress up your narrative with fancy quotes from famous folks.

**Step 9—Pulling it Together**

* Energize yourself with positive feelings to finish off the job.
* Prepare for critical feedback and use it.
* Use spell and grammar check, but don’t rely on them. Be responsible for your proofreading.
* Familiarize yourself with common usage errors and avoid them.
* Steer clear of jargon (words that are specific to only one field).

**Step 10—Finishing up**

* You can start sentences with a conjunction (but, and, etc.) as long as you use them well.
* Use gender sensitive language and gender neutral forms for occupations (firefighter is better than fireman).
* Proofread carefully
* Give your eyes and mind adequate rest before proofreading.
* Try proofreading from hard copy (the paper) to see if you can catch more mistakes that way.
* Experiment with font/ink to try to catch mistakes, just make sure to switch it back before submitting.
* Try to proofread with one type of error at a time. Try looking at only spelling, then only commas, etc.