

College Admissions Essay Format

Below is a college application essay prompt to which a student provided a sample draft. He went to a college consultant for revision suggestions which are included. You may also want to use an English teacher, a guidance counselor, or a knowledgeable adult to help you revise. A friend or parent will probably not give you the honest feedback you need.

The Prompt

Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

The Essay Writing Sample

One significant experience I had was when I camped out in the wilderness with my dad for two weeks last summer. That was a very buggy experience, but more than the left-over scars from branch wounds and brambles are left with me. I think I grew up on that trip

I had never camped before and now my father thought it would be good for us to bond, away from civilization. We packed and headed out not for a camp ground with tent sites and shower rooms. We headed for the back regions of swamps and raspberry bushes, at least a thousand miles from home and regular communication.

We actually had to walk into the pond where we would set up our home-away-from home. What a trek, it was terrible, and when we finally arrived, I was already set to leave. But, no. We had to unpack our gear, prepare the ground, put up the tent, and then think about food. That wasn't going to be a quick trip to the frig for ice cream and soda. We needed a camp fire, a place to put our staples so bears wouldn't get into them, and the meal itself—trout. That meant we had to get our fishing gear ready and wade out to the depth so cold streams and running leeches! YUCK. It was a good 45 minutes later, while the sun set and the flies bit, that we got our first bites. I was able to get two trout, and dad finished off with two more. We gutted them and fried them—delicious, I must say. It was then we sat and talked over the plans for the next day.

Those two weeks were difficult. I had to do everything from scratch, even build my own out house. I had to carry water, find berries, get wood for the fire, dry out wet clothes from a night of rain, even mend

things that broke, like my fishing pole. I learned something about myself. I could survive. I didn't need my cell phone or my TV or my CDs, even my friends and my car to get along. Things might not have been the most luxurious for me out in the back country of nowhere, but I was doing pretty well with a full stomach, good sleep, invigorating exercise, and yep, a book, which dad had insisted I bring along.

I also had dad. He and I had never really talked like we did over those two weeks. It's amazing how many things had been left unsaid over the years after he divorced my mom. He told me about how much the divorce hurt, how he and mom had met and fell in love, how much he loved me. I got to ask him what caused the divorce, how he felt about being with me now, how he felt about mom, and his new wife. He explained it all, and it made some sense. The divorce didn't happen out of no-where. There had been problems even before I was born. And, they didn't hate me or each other. They had good and bad feelings and memories, just like I did. I began to see my dad, and my mom, too, through different eyes, and I saw them as people apart from me. That was a revelation, an adult one, that it wasn't all about me and that things don't stay the same or perfect all the time.

When dad and I left the woods, we were still sweating and the deer flies were still biting, but I felt different, I was stronger. And, that strength was something that came not only from knowing how to cook my own food, lug armfuls of wood three or four times a day, and make my own safe and cozy place in the world, no matter where. It came from an inner sense of seeing things as they are. Life isn't just out of a magazine with the best appliances and the nicest furniture. There are other things in life, like dirty floors, and relationships that don't always work, and meals that have to be made. But, that's not all bad.