



TJ Problem-Solving Essay 7-8 Syllabus

Course Goals

1 TJ Admissions Process

Students learn about the details and deadlines for each component of the admissions process.

2 Problem-Solving Essays

Students invest significant time practicing multi-variable problem-solving essays, with an emphasis on organization strategies and explaining their mathematical/scientific thoughts and skills through writing.

3 Timed Essay-Exam Preparation

Students learn how to efficiently work under time constraints and write organized, grammatical, informative essays.

4 Life at TJ

Students learn about what it's like to be a student at TJ, including detailed information about opportunities, school culture, extracurriculars, and any other topic of interest.

Course Topics

1 Holistic Review Overview

Students learn about the evaluative criteria that are involved in the TJ Admissions process.

2 Essay Types

Students review different types of essays that could be written and how to convey ideas properly in each of those.

3 Writing Prompt Analysis

Students learn how to narrow down the topic of a prompt to an idea that can be explained in the time they are given, with an emphasis on "finding the problem" in a variety of problem-solving prompts.

4 Problem-Solving Response Planning

Students learn about past problem-solving prompts and what TJ is looking for in their written solutions, and they plan how they will respond to particular types of prompts.

5 Personal Statements

Students strategize how to write effective and flattering personal statements, and they learn about what topics they may be asked to write about.

6 Essay Structure

Students work on developing an engaging introduction, persuasive supporting paragraphs, and a strong conclusion.

7 Formulaic Writing

Students learn about the benefits of writing with a formula and apply it to their problem-solving responses.

8 Sentence Variety

Students work on varying their sentences to improve the quality of the essay. Students also work on improving diction, or effective word choice.

9 Revision

Students learn how to look back over their writing to find mistakes and correct them efficiently.

Course Schedule

Day 1

PSE Diagnostic Pre-Test

Students will take a preliminary diagnostic to check strengths and weaknesses before instruction begins.

Course Introduction

Students are introduced to the course and align their expectations with the course goals and aims.

Icebreaker

Students get to know each other by comparing their expectations for TJ and gaining valuable insights from their instructor.

TJ Introduction

Students are introduced to the mission, aims, opportunities, and culture of TJ.

Admissions Process Introduction

Students are introduced to the "Holistic Admissions Process" and gain more insight to the requirements and purpose of the Student Portrait Sheet + Problem-Solver Essay.

Diagnostic Roundtable

Students discuss together the diagnostic prompt and consider their response to each.

Day 1 Review

Students reflect on the plethora of information they've learned on the first day of class, and look ahead to the rest of the course.

Day 2

Introduction to the Problem-Solver Essay

Students are introduced to the scope and purpose of TJ's Problem-Solver Essay.

Writing with a Formula

Students learn the benefits of a formulaic approach to the Problem-Solver Essay.

Day 3

Parsing Through Prompts

Students develop their ability to interpret challenging, complex prompts and apply that to a number of Problem-Solver Essay examples.

Parsing Through Personal Statement Questions

Students connect the "parsing through prompts" lesson with SPS questions to identify what is being asked before practicing with a variety of question types.

SPS Practice Set

Students practice a series of personal questions to simulate what they might see on the SPS.

Day 4

Seeing Yourself at TJ

Students think critically about the appeal of TJ, conducting research into the school and its opportunities, and aligning what they find with their own interests.

Writing About Yourself

Students think critically about their own strengths that they would like to present to TJ before developing a strategy to confidently present their strengths and interests to a variety of prompts.

Day 5

Week 1 Review

Students review their progress through the first week before completing a mid-session practice exam.

Mid-Session Complete SPS+PSE Practice

Students put what they've learned to this point into practice by completing a timed simulation of the SPS+Essay.

Mid-Session Practice Review

Students collaboratively review their responses to the prompts on the Mid-Session Complete SPS + Essay Practice.

Day 6

Illuminate Your Reasoning

Students learn how to strengthen their formulaic responses to PSE prompts.

Practice Prompts Review

Students review the day's prompts and share their responses for immediate feedback.

Day 7

Analyzing Hypotheticals

Students learn about the types of hypothetical questions that are likely to appear on the SPS and learn how to analyze what is being asked and sought for in them.

Using Examples

Students learn the value of grounding their responses in reality through the use of examples.

Day 8

Problem-Solving Essay Intensive Practice

Students will briefly warm up before completing a series of challenging PSE prompts.

Day 9

From Solving to Creating and Back

Students create word problems similar to PSE prompts and challenge their classmates to respond.

Day 10

Complete SPS + PSE Post-Test

Students put what they've learned into practice by completing a timed simulation of the SPS+Essay.

End-Session Review

Students have a final opportunity to discuss the SPS + Essay and address any lingering notes, questions, comments, or concerns.

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