**Reviewed with the Writing Sample**

* **Titles:** A title can grab the reader, tease the reader or set the direction of the essay. Often you can find a title in your essay. Look for vivid, memorable or important phases.
* **Specificity or Particularity**: Particular names, dialogue and specific descriptions not only make the scenes more vivid, they make it sound more authentic. Use brand names and specific colors or smells to bring it alive.
* **Use Before and After Scenes to Illustrate Change:** Many of you began your essay with a vivid scene, but ended with an explanation of change.  It's usually more effective to end with a scene that shows the change. Done well, that often makes the explanation unnecessary.  Or use scenes to show how the past experience influences the present or will influence the future.  Show the important moments (when a decision is made or an idea realized, before you knew something and then after) and then you may list or quickly tell less important information to get to the next scene.
* **Vary Your Sentences:** Revise your papers for sentence variety.  Vary sentences by length and by type for rhythm and effect. Try to avoid too many Subject/verb/object beginnings ("Dave ran fast." or "The mailman went home.") in particular the Subject/"to be" construction. ("There is..." or "Edna and Vincent are..." or  "The Bartletts were...")  These are often wasted words that tend to create dead space in your writing and flatten the rhythm.
* **Kill the Adverbs:** Adverbs are almost always propping up weak verbs. Use strong verbs instead. (Or replace the adverbs with similes or metaphors.)
* **Spell Out Numbers Under Ten and Spell Out Numbers at the Beginning of Sentences**.