

Prompt: The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Since I was eight years old, I dreamt of playing quarterback on a football team. After years of trying to convince my parents to let me play, they finally allowed me to join the junior varsity team as a freshman. Much to my excitement, I was chosen to be one of the new quarterbacks. However, I ended up playing only the equivalent of one quarter that season, so it was a surprise that the varsity coach asked me to be the starting varsity quarterback for next year.

It was the halfway through the second quarter of the fourth game of my sophomore year when I threw two consecutive passes and suddenly felt a sharp pain in my lower back. This was more than a bruise or a strain. As the game progressed, it got worse. When I got home that night, I told my mom that I needed to see an orthopedic doctor. That Tuesday, I had an MRI which revealed a fractured L3 vertebrae. My doctor told me I couldn't play football or have any strenuous movement for three months. I would also have to wear a back brace the entire time.

This abrupt change triggered an emotional collapse which also caused other parts of my life to spiral downward. I stopped hanging out with my friends and lost all interest in school. For months, I did the minimum amount of work necessary to turn in assignments. I would show up for tests unprepared and **indifferent to the grade I received**. All my grades tanked. Because I had decided to sign up for two AP and one Honors class my Sophomore year, this disinterestedness meant that I ended the first semester with several Cs which was very disappointing.

The second semester of my Sophomore year, I got my back brace off, and luckily, the basketball coach had saved me a spot on the basketball team. I set out to relearn the basic academic skills I needed to succeed in my classes and ensure my academic eligibility. Seeing those Cs from the first semester was a wakeup call: I knew that I could do better. Thus, I started second semester with something to prove to myself. To relearn those basic skills, I had to start from the beginning. This meant writing down every single assignment from every single class. It meant doing the homework every single night no matter what excuse I had not to do it. Of course I stumbled in the beginning, but after months of persistence, I finally rebuilt the skills I needed. I ended the semester with only one C on my transcript. It wasn't great, but it was a start, and I finally rebuilt the habits I needed to succeed.

Two weeks before the end of the second semester, I approached my leadership teacher with the idea of running a TedX conference at my high school. I knew that running this conference would be a significant undertaking, but with my rebuilt academic habits, I was confident that I could continue my school work while also coordinating the event. Eight months later, on the first day of my second semester Junior year, TedX Mountain View High School hosted five guest speakers and nine student speakers in a day-long conference where more than four hundred students attended. And I had earned straight As my first semester of my Junior year.

Through this experience, I found that my passion for learning could drive me to succeed in my classes even if I struggled with the routine completion of nightly homework. I learned to

distinguish which classes were easier for me and which classes I had to work really hard in. I learned that the principles that I learned in school are directly applicable to the real world.

PERSONAL ESSAY RUBRIC

The personal essay brings to life on the page your unique character. Required length: apx. 700 words.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Focus	Essay is largely lacking focus. It may be difficult to follow or confusing. Generalizations, clichés, or vague language abounds.	Essay is somewhat focused, but the writer's attention wanders or slips into vague, general, or cliché language which hinders the essay's effectiveness.	Essay is fairly well focused, communicating a clear and somewhat original expression of the writer's character. Some parts of the essay could be more specific or original.	Unique character of the writer comes to life on the page. The essay's "focusing lens" effectively distinguishes the writer in an original way and completely avoids clichés or generalizations.
Organization	Essay only has one paragraph or still appears as freewrite or very rough draft.	Essay is organized with paragraphs, although may lack a cohesive narrative or montage structure. Writer has put some thought into opening and closing lines.	Paragraphs are organized intentionally in order to enhance the reader's enjoyment and comprehension of the material, although narrative or montage structure could be improved. Opening and closing lines introduce and summarize ideas effectively.	Writer artfully blends narrative and reflective portions of essay. Opening hook is an effective attention getter. Closing statement sums up essay focus in a powerful way. (Narrative or montage structure is highly effective.)
Style	No language devices are used to connect with the audience.	Writer uses few purposeful writing strategies. Language is overly formal or vague.	Writer uses a variety of writing strategies to make reflection clear to the reader. Language is appropriate but does not adequately convey writer's unique voice.	Writer's voice and personality expressed through writing. Language is precise and coherent. Writer uses "Show don't tell" details, sensory language, and narrative strategies.
Mechanics	Essay cannot be understood due to many errors of	Essay contains some errors. These errors affect	Essay may contain a few errors. These errors do	Essay is free from errors of spelling, grammar, and

	spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	the reader's ability to understand the material.	not impact reader's ability to comprehend material.	punctuation.
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