

## The Dreaded First Line

*One of the toughest parts of writing an effective application is nailing the first sentence. It needs to be captivating and informative. It needs to pull the reader in without giving too much away. It can feel like an impossible task, but it's doable. Here are some that worked.*

Unlike many mathematicians, I live in an irrational world; I feel that my life is defined by a certain amount of irrationalities that bloom too frequently, such as my brief foray in front of 400 people without my pants.

Sitting cross-legged on the floor of a Bhimanagar slum dwelling in Bangalore, I ran my fingers across a fresh cut on my forehead.

I almost didn't live through September 11th, 2001.

When I was 8 years old, I shocked my family and a local archaeologist by discovering artifacts dating back almost 3,500 years.

When I was in eighth grade I couldn't read.

While traveling through the daily path of life, have you ever stumbled upon a hidden pocket of the universe?

The spaghetti burbled and slushed around the pan, and as I stirred it, the noises it gave off began to sound increasingly like bodily functions.

I had never seen anyone get so excited about mitochondria.

Cancer tried to defeat me, and it failed.

I stand on the riverbank surveying this rippled range like some riparian cowboy—instead of chaps, I wear vinyl, thigh-high waders and a lasso of measuring tape and twine is slung over my arm.

I have old hands.

Flying over enemy territory, I took in Beirut's beautiful skyline and wondered if under different circumstances I would have hopped on a bus and come here for my vacation. Instead, I saw the city from the window of a helicopter, in military uniform, my face camouflaged, on my way to a special operation deep behind enemy lines.

My younger sister, Jessica, arrived home one day reeling about the shirt that her friend had worn to school. It had simply read, "Genocide, Homicide, Suicide, Riverside."

I'll never forget the day when my childhood nightmares about fighting gigantic trolls in the Lord of the Rings series became a reality. Sword in hand and clad in medieval samurai