

DOCUMENT 2 OF 3

48-Hour Essay Audit

A realistic example of the feedback a student receives

Reader diagnosis

What is working	A credible setting, a clear interest in hands-on problem-solving, and one useful scene with genuine stakes.
What is holding it back	The draft covers too much time and names familiar lessons instead of showing the writer's particular way of thinking.
Best revision path	Center the essay on the blue-bike repair. Use the missed diagnosis to reveal intellectual humility, then show how that changed later behavior.

Priority map

Priority	Finding	What to do next
1	The essay's real question appears late.	Open near the failed alley test, not with the volunteering origin story.
2	Reflection relies on broad traits.	Replace broad trait labels with the more specific lesson: familiar answers can stop inquiry too early.
3	The college ending is generic.	Connect engineering to a demonstrated habit of mind, not a promise to help people.
Keep	The bike shop, slipping chain, and owner's commute.	These details are grounded and belong to this writer.

Margin notes on the original

Representative annotations

These notes diagnose the draft and ask questions. They do not supply replacement prose.

[1] Every Saturday morning, I volunteer at the Eastside Bike Cooperative. I first joined because I needed service hours, but I quickly became interested in fixing bikes.

1 Honest, but the chronological setup delays the strongest scene. Could the essay begin when the repair fails under real conditions?

One Saturday, a woman brought in a blue commuter bike with a chain that kept slipping. I adjusted the rear derailleur and replaced the worn cable. When I tested it in the alley, the gears finally shifted without jumping.

2 This is the draft's most promising moment, but it resolves too easily. What did you initially miss? What made the repair intellectually difficult?

The cooperative has taught me patience, problem-solving, and the value of community service.

3 These are reasonable lessons, but they are labels rather than insight. Which belief or behavior actually changed? The answer should be visible in a later action.

Revision roadmap

A student-owned plan

The reviewer identifies the work. The student decides the language.

1. Rebuild the opening around the failed test

Start close to the moment the repair appears finished but fails in the alley. Preserve the blue bike and commute details. Do not manufacture drama; the pressure comes from having to admit the diagnosis was incomplete.

Questions to answer

What changed when the bike carried weight? What did you assume? Who helped you see the missing variable? What did you say to the owner?

2. Show the new habit in a second, smaller example

A short later example can prove the lesson lasted. This might involve notes, a diagnostic checklist, or a question you now ask newer volunteers. Choose only what is true.

3. Replace the generic trait list

The strongest insight is not 'I became persistent.' It is closer to intellectual humility: competence includes testing the explanation you most want to be right. Express that idea in your own phrasing.

4. Make engineering the consequence, not the announcement

The final paragraph can connect the demonstrated habit to engineering. Avoid predicting future impact or naming broad ambitions the essay has not earned.

**Reviewer
boundary**

We have intentionally not written a replacement opening or conclusion. The submitted revision should remain the student's original work.

Final check

What the student should verify

Use this checklist after revising, before proofreading sentence-level details.

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Opening

The first paragraph creates a real question without exaggerating the scene.

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Specificity

Each technical detail is accurate and understandable to a non-specialist.

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Reflection

The insight is more precise than patience, service, or problem-solving.

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Evidence

A later action demonstrates that the lesson changed behavior.

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Voice

The phrasing sounds like the student, including its natural restraint.

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Ending

Engineering follows from the story instead of appearing as a generic career statement.