

EXAMPLE

BEFORE & AFTER

- OUTLINE
- FIRST DRAFT
- FINAL DRAFT
- ANALYSIS

OUTLINE

The student and I selected this topic and collaborated on this outline after ~3 hours of brainstorming.

Background/Context

- Open with a scene in present tense to hook the reader: "I'm working a double shift, it's ninety-five degrees, and the ball picker is broken..." Tell it in your own words, make it sensory (visual/smells).
- Zoom out and describe the context of your story (no longer present tense): "I've spent the past two summers working..."
- Explain and CONTRAST your two jobs and the characters (use names) surrounding you.
 - Provide concrete details such as bussing uniform (black pants, grey collared shirt), made \$9.50 an hour
 - Offer a couple anecdotes that inject a sense of humor/pathos
 - Atomic shrimp
 - Breaking the wine glasses
 - Use industry jargon/slang to establish how immersed you were in the job
- Hint at what you learned from the job (will be explored in depth later): "It was hard work but it was fun at times..."

Analysis

- Transition into the conflict of the essay: "After one week, I regretted switching jobs..."
- Describe what you expected the new job to be like
- Be honest/vulnerable about your misconceptions
 - "It was naive of me to assume that..."
- Compare your expectations to the reality of the golf job
 - Lonely, physical, and demoralizing
 - try to make this sound matter of fact, not whiny
- Reflect on how/why the busser job was superior
 - teamwork, feedback, accountability
 - "It was so much more enjoyable to do the bussing job because there were other people to encourage me when I felt down and I did the same for them"

Reflection

- Demonstrate maturity and perspective: "The nature of the work (golf vs bussing) wasn't the problem--it was the isolation..."
 - Show how your mentality has evolved since your busser job
- Share what you learned about yourself: "I realized that in order to be in a healthy state of mind, I need to laugh and complain and suffer with other people..."
 - Emphasize how much you supported others and that it was gratifying to you
- How is this realization going to inform your mindset/behavior in the future?
- Is there an example from a different realm of your life (family/school) where you show evidence that you have internalized this lesson?
 - Drive home that your collaborative side has bloomed

FIRST DRAFT

The student wrote a first draft based on the outline on the previous page.

Over the past two summers I have worked at Washington Golf Country Club. At first glance it is a vast plot of land with a well kept golf course, clean pool, and an abundance of tennis courts. Although, what members and other people do not see is the amount of work needed to uphold these standards. I started working at the club as a busser two summers ago; I would work two shifts everyday from 9am-2pm and 4pm-9pm playing tennis during my two hour break. Working as a busser, I wore a grey colored shirt with black pants even on hot summer days. When I started the job a waitress named Carmel taught me how to set tables, prepare bread, and clear tables. The worst tables to clear were the ones that had tons of different sauces because you would end up getting many different sauces on your hands and your hands would smell like sauce for a day. Carmel was a mentor to me and helped me if we ran out of bread or if the tables were not ready for the next group. I was not the only busser on the job there was someone else named Freddy. He had the biggest personality and was always so outgoing talking to literally anyone who would look in his direction. There was one dish at the club, he really liked called the Atomic Shrimp, whenever a table left an uneaten piece of shrimp on the plate he would always quickly slip it into his mouth before he threw away what was left on the plate. I was never able to spend any of the money I earned from that summer, allowing me to add to it next summer when I started my new job.

This past summer, I worked at the golf course. After a week, I already regretted it. Initially I thought working at the golf course would be more fun. I thought I would be able to drive golf carts everywhere but in reality I was only allowed to drive the carts to the driving range and back. I would have to constantly carry buckets of balls back and forth to make sure the members always had enough balls. My boss wanted to make the driving range an experience for the members resulting in me having to meet unrealistic expectations when I was the only one working the range. I started to miss my old job and co-workers. While working the range I have no one to talk to and no one to help me, it was a very lonely job. The work was grueling and I would always come home with my clothes soaked in sweat and water with grease all over my pants. Picking up all the balls in the picker was the hardest part of working at the driving range because it is a caged in golf cart that traps heat. So I would sweat so much in the picker and then I would have to clean all the balls by running them through a machine to then take them back to the hitting bays where the members will again hit them. It felt like an endless cycle of work, no matter how ahead I got or how fast I worked it almost always felt as if I was catching up. Every time I went into work it seemed as if there was always something broken; none of the equipment was ever working in perfect condition, I would often find myself having to report a broken cart or machine every week. There was a day where I was working and the picker broke and all the balls I had collected were thrown out of the baskets, so I had to close the range early and then proceed to pick up all the balls on the range with shag bags and a couple baskets. The job at the golf course did not turn out the way I dreamt it would, and I even worked for 50 cents less at the course then when I worked at the restaurant.

Everyday the club feeds all the employees and I would often see all my old co-workers from the restaurant there. I would think about all the times I have worked with them in the past and would regret moving to the golf course. I missed being part of that staff because you felt like a family, you would help each other out. You would suffer together you would succeed together. I even missed Freddy and looking at him eat the Atomic Shrimp right next to the trash can where members could not see him.

FINAL DRAFT

The entire process from brainstorming to the final draft took ~18 hours.

It's past 9 PM at the driving range and my khakis are grease-stained and sweat soaked. The ball picker is broken and I have to pick up over 5,000 golf balls by hand before I clock out. My shift tomorrow begins at 5 AM and it dawns on me that the picker will be broken then, too. I can't believe I thought this job was a promotion.

In the summer of 2019, I was a restaurant busser at a country club. A waitress named Carmel taught me how to set tables, prepare bread, and clear tables. She was a great mentor and when I trained new bussers I made sure to be as patient with them as Carmel was with me. Freddy was a fellow busser who became kitchen-famous for eating Atomic Shrimp off of the dirty plates that he cleared. Bussing was hard work, but working with friends made my shift fly by.

In 2020, I started a new job at the golf course. I was excited to drive the golf cart and be outdoors. But a week into the golf job, I missed bussing. My shift never overlapped with the other workers so I was always alone. The work was grueling: I had to replenish balls in hitting bays and no matter how fast I worked, I was always behind. I sweated through my clothing and smelled so bad that I was embarrassed whenever someone called me over for help.

At staff lunch, I barely saw my old coworkers. I didn't have time to ask Carmel how college was going or catch up with Freddy. I thought getting out of the cramped kitchen would be an upgrade, but being alone was a huge demotion. I stressed about everything that went wrong by myself and my small victories felt insignificant. Being part of a team had made the bad things easier and it made the good things matter. When Freddy broke wine glasses, I cleaned up the glass shards while he bussed tables, and when I accidentally let the bread burn, Freddy made a new batch and covered for me. We suffered together and succeeded together.

Before my summer jobs, I used to get frustrated during group projects because I thought I could work faster alone. I would divide up the work and assign it to my teammates. I thought divide and conquer was the most efficient way to get the project over and done with. I eventually realized that the reason my kitchen team worked so well together was because each of us contributed something unique.

These days when I'm in a group project and my team is struggling to make a decision, I channel my inner Carmel and become a leader. If my group is sailing smoothly, I play the role of supportive teammate, like Freddy. I've learned that in order to be a good teammate, I have to adapt and play the role that will best serve the group. Sometimes that role is not my favorite one, but if I ever start to think I'd prefer to work alone, I think back to picking up thousands of golf balls.

I remember how exhausted I was and how the worst part was not having anyone to complain about it with. This memory reminds me that being part of a team isn't about picking and choosing what responsibilities you want--it's about pulling your weight as best as you can. My two working summers have taught me that I can tolerate loneliness, but I prefer a bad day in the kitchen to a good day on the range alone. Both my attitude toward teams and my ability to contribute to them have improved greatly. I'm confident this maturity will serve me well in college, where I will continue to practice new roles and become the Swiss Army knife version of a team player.

ANALYSIS

FIRST DRAFT WEAKNESSES & HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

- Too many details! Your uniform, what you did on your breaks, the names of your co-workers--it's a solid job of setting the scene, but beyond descriptive accuracy they aren't telling me anything about you
 - Pick a few vivid details (Atomic shrimp, Carmel's mentorship) and explain how they impacted YOU
- The conflict is too simplistic. It sounds like a standard "my job is awful" narrative without a unique take or angle
 - Incorporate an element of self-discovery. Drive home the major juxtaposition between what you thought you were getting into and what the job actually was. What did you discover about working alone? What were the disadvantages/advantages and how figure this out?
- The tone when talking about the golf course job leans too far into complaining (it could come off as whiny)
 - Instead of listing all the bad parts of the job and how physical the labor was, explain how it impacted your psyche. By refocusing what was mentally difficult about the golf job, it no longer sounds like you're averse to hard work. This way, you establish that you enjoyed the hard work of the busser job--but the differentiating factor that made it bearable was the team element

FINAL DRAFT STRENGTHS

- The final draft retains the strengths of the original's scene-setting details but now, the details offer insight into the student's mind. When he mentions that Carmel was a good mentor, he also incorporates the fact that he trained new bussers at the job and kept her teaching methods in mind. This tells the reader that he is conscientious, responsible, and resourceful. The remark about Carmel is not simply informational--it serves double-duty by illuminating the student's personal qualities.
- The first draft hints at the idea that a sense of "family" made the bussing job better than the golf job. The final draft articulates this notion much more explicitly and eloquently by providing concrete examples of how the student supported/was supported by his restaurant co-workers.
- The original draft does explain how this lesson carried over into the rest of the student's life. In the final draft, he describes how his attitude toward school group projects has transformed thanks to the experience on the golf course. This extrapolation showcases his ability to apply lessons to scenarios outside of their immediate applicability
- Tonally, the final draft has a much less negative undertone. This was accomplished by focusing on the good parts of bussing and how the student realized he hadn't adequately appreciated them. In fact, the tone landed in a sweet spot of maturity and self-awareness.