What extracurricular activities do colleges love to see?

By Maggie Hardin
Published November 12, 2015

AVID’s Critical Reading Process
This lesson will follow AVID’s critical reading process and will utilize the following strategies:
1.) Pre-reading
2.) Interacting with the text
3.) Extending beyond the text

AVID’s WICOR Methodology
This lesson utilizes the WICOR methodology. The WICOR icon will be used throughout the lesson to communicate when an activity is using WICOR methods.

First Reading
- “Marking the Text: Circling and Underlining Essential Information”
  - Identify and underline information relevant to the writing task.
- Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards
  - R 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; and cite specific evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
  - R 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Second Reading
- “Writing in the Margins: Responding and Connecting”
  - Respond and connect to ideas in the text and write your thoughts in the margins.
- Common Core College and Career Readiness Standard
  - R 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; and cite specific evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading Prompt: In the article “What extracurricular activities do colleges love to see?” Maggie Harden challenges the significance of each extracurricular activity and offers advice regarding how to utilize them within the college application process. As you read, circle key terms and underline facts and examples that the author uses to support her claim. In the left margin, explain how each particular example supports the author’s point.

Estimated Preparation Time: 20–30 minutes
Estimated Instructional Time: 90 minutes
Recommended Pacing: 2 days
Critical Reading Lesson
Instructional Model for AVID Teachers

What extracurricular activities do colleges love to see?

Using the AVID Weekly Resources
Before teaching this lesson, go to avidweekly.org to access additional teaching tools. Find the following sections in the top navigation.

Teacher Resources
This page offers strategies and approaches that will help you prepare for the lesson, set expectations, and prepare for the reading.

Assessment Tool
This page offers general questions teachers can use to assess students' understanding and analysis of a reading.

Pre-Reading

Developing Students' Understanding of the Subject (approximately 20 minutes)
1.) Use the teacher handout The College Admission Game: Student Profile Sheet (attached to the AVID Weekly lesson) as a guide for creating Student Profile Cards. Write or word process the GPA in large letters on the front side of an 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of cardstock. Copy each corresponding profile statement on the back (one profile per card, eight cards total).
2.) Introduce the activity by asking questions such as: What type of students are selective colleges actively recruiting for their institution? What student behaviors impact your chances of being considered or accepted? What special circumstances draw attention to your application?
3.) Ask for eight volunteers. Give each student a Profile Card, and allow a few minutes for them to read over the card.
4.) Have students line up in front of the classroom in order of GPA. Then hold up the card with the GPA facing the students, so they can read the information on the back.
5.) The game host (teacher) reads each statement from the teacher handout College Admission Game Directions (attached to the AVID Weekly lesson), and students move up or back according to what is written on their Profile Card.
6.) After the game, debrief the activity as a class.


Building Vocabulary (approximately 15 minutes)
Preview the following vocabulary words and any other words you find in the text that might be unfamiliar to your students. You can provide the words and their definitions, ask students to infer the meanings of words through context clues, ask students to record words and their definitions in a vocabulary journal, have students look up the words in a dictionary, draw the words, use a semantic map, or you can discuss each word with the whole class.

Key Concepts:
• college admissions
• extracurricular

Key Vocabulary:
• GPA (par. 1)
• standardized test scores (par. 1)
• admissions decision (par. 2)
• leadership (par. 2)
• interest (par. 4)
• admissions counselor (par. 5)
• admissions officers (par. 6)
• CommonApp (par. 9)
• well-rounded (par. 15)
• essay (par. 18)
• personal statement (par. 18)
• resume (par. 18)

Making Predictions (approximately 5 minutes)
Once students have had an opportunity to build prior knowledge through writing and speaking, they are ready to make some predictions.

• Hand out a copy of the article. Ask students to survey the text. Have them report on what they see. Are there subtitles? Is the text divided into sections? What is the length of the individual paragraphs? Have them scan the whole text in order to get an idea of its length.
• It's a good idea to have students make predictions before they read. Ask them to read the title and make predictions about the message of the text. You could ask, "What will this text be about?" You could also ask them to read the first and last paragraphs and make another prediction.
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- Take a look at the publication and author information. You can discuss this information as a class or you can have students discuss this information in collaborative groups. Why should students read this information? The publication date tells the reader when the text was written, allowing him or her to better understand the issues during the time in which the text was written. Author information can be useful, too. An author’s personal and professional experiences can tell the reader a lot about the purpose of the text and the intended audience.

Interacting with the Text

Instructions for the lesson are provided below. Use an overhead projector or document camera to model and support the following activities.

Numbering the Paragraphs (approximately 5 minutes)

Note: Students familiar with the “Marking the Text” strategy may be able to mark the text during their first read. If not, have students read the text once without marking or writing in the margins.

1.) Go over the “Marking the Text” strategy with your students. (If you do not have a copy of this strategy, please visit avidweekly.org and download a copy from the matrix). Students should have copies of this handout on their desks or the ideas from this handout should be available to them in some other way.

2.) Begin with numbering the paragraphs. If students are not familiar with numbering paragraphs, we will want to help them number individual paragraphs.

First Read: Circling and Underlining Essential Information (approximately 20 minutes)

Note: Depending on your students’ skill level, you may want to work through a few paragraphs as a class. You might also reduce the amount of rereading students do by directing them to specific paragraphs that contain essential information. Consider having your students work in pairs as they learn how to circle and underline essential ideas in a text.

Circling Key Terms

3.) Here are a few key words and names students should identify and circle.

   a. Paragraph 1: “applying to college,” “ideal applicant,” “high GPA,” “standardized test scores,” and “extracurricular activities”

   b. Paragraph 2: “admissions decision,” “leadership,” and “stand out”

   c. Paragraph 4: “genuine interest”

   d. Paragraph 5: “admissions counselor”

   e. Paragraph 6: “admissions officers”

   f. Paragraph 9: “CommonApp” and “10 activities”

   g. Paragraph 11: “equally” and “application”

   h. Paragraph 15: “well-rounded experience”

   i. Paragraph 18: “essay,” “personal statement,” and “resume”

You may be able to find additional key terms in the text that are not included in the list above. Identifying these words will help students summarize the text either verbally or in writing.

Underlining Essential Ideas

4.) Here are some essential ideas students should identify and underline.

   a. Paragraph 1: “… someone who has a high GPA, strong standardized test scores and a wide variety of extracurricular activities. However, there are so many things to consider in regards to a student’s extracurriculars that the ideal applicant might not exist.”

   b. Paragraph 2: “The extracurricular struggle is real, but here are some tips to help your activities stand out.”

   c. Paragraph 3: “Don’t join activities because you think they’re what colleges want…”

   d. Paragraph 4: “… but how involved you were. It’s much easier to be involved if you’re passionate about the activity.”

   e. Paragraph 5: “… I think it’s better to sign up for however many extracurriculars that they can be really dedicated to, actually go to the meetings and maybe be an executive board member.”

   f. Paragraph 6: “It’s also important to note that colleges will look at your extracurriculars in totality.”

   g. Paragraph 7: “Some students are passionate about a single activity and have many years of commitment, while others participate in a variety of activities to find those that suit them best. There is no ‘perfect’ activity, work or leadership list for students.”
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h. Paragraph 8: “Use the CommonApp’s activity limit to your benefit…”

i. Paragraph 9: “Students applying to college through the CommonApp can only list 10 activities, which can seem limiting if you participate in more than that.” and “… slim down your list and highlight the experiences you were really invested in.”

j. Paragraph 11: “Most extracurriculars are weighed equally in the college admissions process…” and “… highlight the activities you were really active in.”

k. Paragraph 12: “It’s just good to be very well-rounded and have a holistic experience in high school.”

l. Paragraph 13: “Get your feet wet for college”

m. Paragraph 14: “Colleges like to look at extracurriculars to get a better picture of you and how you’ll fit in on campus.”

n. Paragraph 17: “Consider writing about an extracurricular experience in your essay”

o. Paragraph 18: “… because they’ve been advised not to repeat what’s in their resume.”

p. Paragraph 19: “I do prefer that the essay tells me more about [students] and helps me to get to know them…”

q. Paragraph 20: “If you do choose to write your essay on an extracurricular, make sure to focus on how the experience impacted you…”

r. Paragraph 22: “Admissions officers use the essay as a way to get to know you, and your activities are a good opportunity to convey your interests and personality.”

You may want students to underline essential ideas that are not included in the list above.

5.) For this second read, have students go back through the text and respond and connect to ideas in the margins. Students’ responses will vary. What is important is that students make personal connections to the ideas in the text. One way to support students is to limit the amount of paragraphs they reread by pointing to specific paragraphs in the text that they should respond to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraphs</th>
<th>Your responses and/or connections</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–2</td>
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<td>3–7</td>
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<td>17–21</td>
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<td>22</td>
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Extending Beyond the Text
Closing activities do not need to be process papers, writing assignments that go through multiple drafts. As students learn how to read more critically, we should give them opportunities to write brief analyses of what they read. These focused responses will help deepen their understanding of the texts they read while developing their academic writing skills. Writing or speaking exercises like the ones listed here can also serve as formative assessments, providing valuable feedback about what your students know and what they still need to learn.

• Have students write a one-page paper that addresses the writing prompt. (approximately 50 minutes)

  Writing Prompt: Analyze the arguments presented in the article “What extracurricular activities do colleges love to see?”. Evaluate the evidence used to support the author’s point. What does the author want the reader to consider as a result of reading the text?

• Engage students in one of the AVID Weekly Lesson Templates. Log in to AVID Weekly and click “Teacher Resources.” Then, in the left navigation, click “Lesson Templates.” This page offers instructions on how to run Socratic Seminars, Four Corners Discussions, and other student-centered activities. (approximately 20–50 minutes)

Second Read: Responding and Connecting to Ideas in the Text (approximately 15 minutes)

Note: Consider engaging your students in pair-share and small group activities as they work through the paragraphs. Responses will vary. Students familiar with this strategy may be able to respond or connect in the margins while they are marking the text.
• Engage students in a “3-Part Source Integration” writing exercise. A 3-Part Source Integration is a statement that includes the title of the text, the author’s name, author information, source material that is either paraphrased or directly quoted, and a brief statement explaining the significance of the paraphrase or quotation. The following is an example of a 3-Part Source Integration. (approximately 15 minutes)

Sample 3-Part Source Integration: In “Ethanol’s Failed Promise,” Lester Brown and Jonathan Lewis, two environmental activists, claim that food-to-fuel mandates are causing damage to our environment (par. 3). This is important because as America moves toward energy independence, it must be vigilant to ensure that new energy sources do not cause new problems.

• Engage students in creating an original graphic interpretation of the text in the form of a One-Pager (see One-Pager handout attached to this AVID Weekly lesson). On a single piece of paper or poster board, students design an original graphic interpretation of the learning experience, which includes a personal response to the experience as a whole. The response can be a summary, answer to an essential question, or an interpretation. Additionally, the One-Pager must include quotes relating to the topic, higher-level questions to provoke further thoughts, essential vocabulary, and a symbolic border that encompasses all components.

One-Pager Format:
• Use unlined white paper.
• Title the One-Pager appropriately to reflect the content.
• Use colored pens, pencils, or markers. The more visually appealing it is, the more your peers will learn.
• Fill the entire page.
• Be purposeful about the arrangement of your One-Pager. For example, have a reason for using a certain color or for placing an object in a certain place.
• Write two quotations from the reading or activity. Use the proper grammatical format.

• Use three visual images, either drawn or cut out from magazines, to create a central focus to your page. If you use a computer image, personalize it to make it your own.

• Place five essential vocabulary words/phrases around the images. These terms/words/phrases should express the main ideas and your impressions, feelings, or thoughts about what you have seen or read.

• Write the main idea of the reading.

• Write two Costa’s Level 2 or 3 questions and answer them.

• Put a symbolic colored border around the edges of the page.

• Write your name on the back.

## The College Admission Game

### Student Profile Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4.1  | - You're in the top 10% of your class.  
      - You forgot to change the name of the college when word-processing the essay that was sent to several different schools. |
| 4.0  | - You attended an enriching summer program between your junior and senior year.  
      - You decided not to take AP® classes (even though your school offered them) because you wanted to protect your grade point average. |
| 3.7  | - The topic of your essay was sports (as a metaphor for life).  
      - You’re an Eagle Scout.  
      - You’re all-region in basketball. |
| 3.5  | - Your intended major is Greek.  
      - You participated in NO extracurricular activities.  
      - You attended an enriching summer program between your junior and senior year. |
| 3.3  | - You applied early decision to your first-choice college.  
      - Your intended major is psychology.  
      - You plagiarized your college essay and got caught. |
| 3.1  | - Your intended major is psychology or pre-med.  
      - You wrote an essay that was passed around the office because it was so good.  
      - You’re the first in your family to attend college.  
      - You’re a varsity athlete.  
      - You earned a “D” in your junior year but wrote to the college to explain extenuating circumstances.  
      - You’ve taken an exceptionally strong academic program. |
| 2.9  | - You direct the gospel choir at your church.  
      - You are quiet and don’t know your teachers well enough to ask for a recommendation.  
      - You’ve participated in community service.  
      - You’ve taken an exceptionally strong academic program.  
      - You’re from a single-parent household and must work to help with expenses. |
| 2.8  | - You’re a legacy at the college to which you’re applying.  
      - You did not write the optional essay for your college application.  
      - You’ve participated in some community service.  
      - Your last name is Gates and the college library is named after you. |

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College Admission Game Directions

1. If you have taken an exceptionally strong academic program, move up two spaces.
2. If you direct the gospel choir at your church, move up one space.
3. If you clearly stated that this college is your first choice by making an early decision application and commitment, move up two spaces.
4. If your intended major is psychology or pre-med, move back one space.
5. If your intended major is Greek, move up one space.
6. If you do not know any of your teachers well enough to ask for a recommendation, move back two spaces.
7. If, when you word-processed your college essay, you forgot to change the name of the college you were applying to, move back three spaces.
8. If you are a legacy, move up two spaces.
9. If you did not write the optional college essay, move back one space.
10. If the topic of your college essay was sports as a metaphor for life, move back one space.
11. If you wrote the “Essay of the Year,” the one that was passed around the office, move up two spaces.
12. If you plagiarized your college essay and got caught, sit down—you’re out of the competition entirely.
13. If you will be the first in your family to attend college, move up two spaces.
14. If you attended an enriching summer program between your junior and senior years, move up two spaces.
15. If you come from a single-parent household and must work part-time to help with expenses, move up two spaces.
16. If you have participated in no extracurricular activities, move back three spaces.
17. If you have participated in a significant community service project, move up one space.
18. If you are an Eagle Scout, move up two spaces.
19. If you are a varsity athlete, move up one space. If you’re all-region in a sport, move up another space.
20. If you earned a “D” in an academic course at the end of your junior year, move back three spaces.
21. If you wrote a letter to the college admission officer and explained the extenuating circumstances surrounding a grade of “D,” move up one space.
22. If you decided to protect your GPA by not taking AP classes offered at your school, move back two spaces.
23. If you are in the top 10% of your graduating class, move up two spaces.
24. If your last name is Gates, and the name on the college library is Gates, and it’s not a coincidence, move all the way to the front of the line and stay there.
One-Pager

A One-Pager is a creative response to your learning experience. It allows you to respond imaginatively while being brief and concise in making connections between words and images. We think about what we see and read differently when we are asked to do something with what we have seen or read. We learn best when we create our own ideas. Your personal thinking about what you have experienced should be understood by the audience that views the One-Pager.

Follow this format for your One-Pager.

☐ Use unlined white paper.

☐ Title the One-Pager appropriately to reflect the content.

☐ Use colored pens, pencils, or markers. The more visually appealing it is the more your peers will learn.

☐ Fill the entire page.

☐ Be purposeful about the arrangement of your One-Pager. For example, have a reason for using a certain color or for placing an object in a certain place.

☐ Write two quotations from the reading or activity. Use the proper grammatical format.

☐ Use three visual images, either drawn or cut out from magazines, to create a central focus to your page. If you use a computer image, personalize it to make it your own.

☐ Place five essential vocabulary words/phrases around the images. These terms/words/phrases should express the main ideas, your impressions, feelings, or thoughts about what you have seen or read.

☐ Write the main idea of the reading.

☐ Write two Costa’s Level 2 or 3 questions and answer them.

☐ Put a symbolic colored border around the edges of the page.

☐ Write your name on the back.

What extracurricular activities do colleges love to see?

By Maggie Harden
Chicago Tribune
(TNS)

When applying to college, it can be easy to fall into the trap of trying to seem like the "ideal" applicant – someone who has a high GPA, strong standardized test scores and a wide variety of extracurricular activities. However, there are so many things to consider in regards to a student's extracurriculars that the ideal applicant might not exist.

Does having a part-time job affect a student’s admissions decision? Is it better to have a few activities and a leadership role, or 15 activities and no leadership? The extracurricular struggle is real, but here are some tips to help your activities stand out.

1. Don’t join activities because you think they're what colleges want

Joining an activity out of genuine interest is one of the most important steps you can take. Colleges aren’t necessarily looking at what extracurriculars you participated in, but how involved you were. It’s much easier to be involved if you’re passionate about the activity.

"Some students just sign up for tons of extracurriculars left and right, and I don't think that's necessarily in the best interest of the student," said University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh admissions counselor Drew Kopitzke. "That might look good on paper, but for the satisfaction of the student and their overall experience, I think it's better to sign up for however many extracurriculars that they can be really dedicated to, actually go to the meetings and maybe be an executive board member."

It’s also important to note that colleges will look at your extracurriculars in totality. For example, if you have a part-time job, you may only be able to participate in one or two clubs at school, but admissions officers will see that you are working and take that into consideration.

“We consider each student within the context of their application and opportunities offered by their school and community,” said Ohio State regional recruiter Josephine West. “Some students are passionate about a single activity and have many years of commitment, while others participate in a variety of activities to find those that suit them best. There is no ‘perfect’ activity, work or leadership list for students.”

2. Use the CommonApp’s activity limit to your benefit

Students applying to college through the CommonApp can only list 10 activities, which can seem limiting if you participate in more than that. However, use this number as an opportunity to slim down your list and highlight the experiences you were really invested in.

“I think if you have 10 activities that you’re really involved with, that’s going to be plenty,” said Purdue assistant director of admissions Mike Borovsky. “You don’t need to list activities where you only went to the meetings once or twice a semester.”

Most extracurriculars are weighed equally in the college admissions process, so don’t worry about cutting out three years of participation in theater just because you think a college would prefer to see a sport. Instead, highlight the activities you were really active in. This will strengthen your application and highlight your devotion to things inside and outside of school.

“As a rule of thumb, I would say all extracurricular involvement is going to be beneficial,” Kopitzke said. “When I’m methodically combing through a student’s application, there’s not really any activities that weigh heavier than others. It’s just good to be very well-rounded and have a holistic experience in high school.”

3. Get your feet wet for college

Colleges like to look at extracurriculars to get a better picture of you and how you’ll fit in on campus. If you’re passionate enough about an extracurricular you started in high school, utilize that experience and try to stay involved with the activity in college.

“When I was in high school, I was the kid that signed up for everything I could possibly do, and I went to college and I did that too,” Kopitzke said. “It ended up really helping me a lot, and I would encourage students to stay involved when they go off to college because that’s going to open up a lot of doors and give you a lot better, more well-rounded experience.”

High school activities are a great way to find a niche before going to college. If you show that on your application, colleges will take note and begin to envision you as an active part in their future student body, which will help with their admissions decision.
4. Consider writing about an extracurricular experience in your essay

Many students shy away from writing about an extracurricular experience in their essay or personal statement because they've been advised not to repeat what's in their resume. However, extracurriculars can make for a great essay if you had a truly meaningful experience through one of them.

"I do prefer that the essay tells me more about (students) and helps me to get to know them," West said. "If this means they want to tell me about a significant extracurricular experience, I would love to hear about it."

If you do choose to write your essay on an extracurricular, make sure to focus on how the experience impacted you, instead of just that you were involved in it; otherwise, it will become a repetition of what's already in your application.

"If it's something you were really involved in and important to you, write about it," Borovsky said. "If it's something you just want to mention as a 'By the way, I was involved in this, this and this,' it's not going to help you at all."

Admissions officers use the essay as a way to get to know you, and your activities are a good opportunity to convey your interests and personality.

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ABOUT THE WRITER

Maggie Harden attends Vernon Hills High School and is a correspondent for The Mash.

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The Mash is the Chicago Tribune’s newspaper and website written for teens, by teens. The paper is distributed for free each Thursday at Chicago-area high schools and is written largely by high school students.

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Practice radical compassion: Be kind to cockroaches

TNS FORUM
By Paula Moore
Tribune News Service
(TNS)

For several days earlier this month – which happens to be National Pest Management Month, according to the National Pest Management Association – I lived with an alarmingly large cockroach inside my utility room. I first noticed her on a Sunday afternoon on the wall by the door, just out of arm’s reach. She stayed in the same vicinity for days – either high up on the wall or on top of the door frame – and while I wasn’t exactly thrilled with my new houseguest, she wasn’t hurting anything. By Thursday, she’d ventured far enough outside her safety zone that I was able to gently flick her off the wall and into a bucket, after which I carried her outside and released her.

When I later told this story to a friend, he said, “I would have sent that cockroach to nirvana.” But why? Why deny, as writer Tim Kreider put it in an essay in The New York Times, another being’s “single chance to be alive”? If we have a choice between kindness and cruelty, shouldn’t we always err on the side of compassion?

Here are a few things you may not know about cockroaches. Earlier this year, researchers from the Université Libre de Bruxelles published a study showing that cockroaches have individual personalities. The researchers released groups of American cockroaches into a brightly lit arena that contained two shelters and then left them alone for three hours while observing their behavior. The more timid roaches quickly sought cover, while those who were bolder were more likely to explore their surroundings. These varying personality traits could help explain how cockroaches are able to adapt to and survive in inhospitable environments.

Researchers with North Carolina State University discovered that some populations of German cockroaches have undergone changes to their internal chemistry so that sugar tastes bitter to them. In other words, these roaches have evolved to avoid sweet-tasting but deadly poison baits.

A 2010 study by scientists at Queen Mary University of London found that cockroaches are social beings who “talk” to one another about food and prefer to dine in groups. When presented with two identical slices of bread, the roaches repeatedly gathered around the same slice, rather than splitting up.

Cockroaches can recognize individual members of their own families. They live together in close-knit groups and make collective decisions – about where to seek shelter, for instance – that will benefit the entire cockroach clan.

In another study, researchers used computer simulations to show that, even with their tiny brains, insects have enough neural circuits to possess consciousness. “Animals with bigger brains are not necessarily more intelligent,” says Professor Lars Chittka, one of the researchers.

Several years ago, I attended a compassion meditation workshop conducted by a group of visiting Tibetan Buddhist monks. Just before our lunch break, one of the monks told us, “It is important to be kind to all beings – even to cockroaches.” This elicited laughter from some of the other workshop participants, but he wasn’t kidding. And while it may seem radical to extend compassion to a cockroach – or to a mosquito or a mouse or any other being we perceive to be a “pest” – if we don’t respect all life, then we don’t really respect any life. As Kreider says, “A bug may be a small, unimportant thing, but maybe killing or saving one isn’t. Every time I smush a bug I can feel myself smushing something else, too – an impulse toward mercy, a little throb of remorse. Maybe it would feel better to decide that killing even a bug matters.”

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ABOUT THE WRITER
Paula Moore is a senior writer for the PETA Foundation, 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510; www.PETA.org. Information about PETA’s funding may be found at www.peta.org/about/numbers.asp.

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Voices: How to survive PE  
By Abby Zhong  
Chicago Tribune  
(TNS)

PE can be the best part of your day or the class that you absolutely dread the most. It holds a variety of activities for different types of students. You have those that take PE way too seriously (it’s not the Olympics, calm down), those who think they are too cool to participate, those who don’t do anything because they claim to suck at sports and there’s always that one kid who fakes numerous notes so he can be excused from class.

Throughout my years of PE, I learned some easy tricks to survive this horrendous nightmare. For example, I hate dodgeball with a passion. It involves so much work — kicking, running and trying not to get hit by the ball. My academic life is already hard enough! I don’t have time to deal with that. Since my PE teacher gives points for participation, I would mostly decide to kick or try to catch the ball when he’s looking in my direction. Otherwise, you would find me in the back, hiding behind a group of students who knew what they were doing. This method works for any sport — just blend in with a group of students who regularly participate and act like you know what’s going on. You know what they say: Fake it till you make it.

When it’s time for those awful exercise tests, I suck it up and do my best because I don’t want to end up getting a bad grade, especially in PE. What’s more embarrassing, not getting an A or B in PE or running pacers in front of other people? I motivate myself during these tests by telling myself that exercise is good for me. Since I don’t workout outside of school, it’s basically the only effort I put into my “summer body.”

Usually gym class is about 40 minutes long (if yours is longer, I’m praying for you). I’ve learned that no one in this class really pays attention to what others are doing. If you get hit in the face with a ball, just laugh it off. People will forget about it once class is over, and I’m sure there will be other news out there that’ll draw the attention away from you.

You have to be brave, even if the PE uniforms are the most disgusting pieces of clothing that have ever touched your body. Find yourself a group of students that you can easily become friends with. They could motivate you to do better and allow you to realize that you’re not alone. Also, remember that you’re taking this class for the sake of your grades. So try, or act like you are trying.

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