**Entry #1**

If you had paragraphed here, you could have built the tension of the situation more effectively, before releasing it by them laughing.

“Hi!” said a voice over the telephone. “Are you excited to go back to school?” “Of course!” I replied to my friend, Nadya. ~~“Why?” she questioned.~~ “I am excited as I am ready to bring down the top student to the pits!” I told her as a-matter-of-factly. // It went quiet right after that reply then suddenly both of us let out a loud guffaw almost simultaneously. “Change the topic.” Nadya resumed, still giggling and trying to control her laughter. You see, the top student in our school has been the top student for the past 4 years. Yes indeed. Top in class and ~~topped~~ **topping** the level every single year. “Okay, how are your family members doing?” Nadya asked. “They’re all fine, thanks for asking.” I replied. She followed up with another question. “How are your siblings?” My answer was simple. “Annoying.” I told her, smiling wickedly to myself. “ The next reply from my best friend tickled me pink. She quipped, “I love my siblings and it brings me joy taking care of them. You, on the other hand, are more annoying than your siblings actually.” We hung up after quite a long conversation after which I felt that I was ~~even more~~ looking forward to ~~go to~~ school **more** than ever.

Oxford Comma? The English world seems, as it typically is, divided over its use. I suggest you use it consistently. As you might have already realised, punctuation misused has the power to completely warp your intended meaning...

Also, while some may say otherwise, I also encourage you to get comfortable with your double commas.

“...interesting lessons, and, of course, being with my hilarious friends.”

If you can break a long sentence without compromising on the pacing, then perhaps you should do it. Long sentences run the risk of being confusing.

Either “as a matter of fact” or “I told her matter-of-factly

Speaking of school, the words motivating me about school ~~is~~ **are(“the words... are)** ‘always do my best’ so though school life can be hectic, it is part and parcel of being in school. I cannot imagine not going to school, as I will definitely miss all the fun activities, interesting lessons and of course being with my hilarious friends. I am thankful my dad works so hard to pay for everything. Had it not been for him, I would not have new schoolbooks. I would have to make do with hand-me-down textbooks that belonged to my messy and irresponsible sister. Most of her books are dog-eared and doodled with the names of the boys she ever had a crush on. Yes, yuck. Rolling my eyes now. I ~~may have~~ **might have had to** to brave the hordes of other commuters who would be taking the same public bus as I do to go to school, instead of taking the school transport. Then, there is the ever so important pocket money, uniforms and so many other things that only money can buy. In exchange for daddy’s kind acts and all he had done for us, I would do my best in my studies and hopefully get some money from the government and share it equally among my five family members at the end of the year. \*wink\* Read : Edusave.

I notice you really like the ‘rule of three’ (describing things in sets of three). Be consistent when you use it. Over here, you suddenly change tense (would have... would have... **may** have)?

Then there’s my mom. My mom, she has a youthful face with light-brown shoulder length hair and is courteous, kind and smart. To put it simply, my mom is as pretty as a picture. She is what people call a stay-at-home-mom. SAHM for short. She needs to take charge of the house when daddy is working. I think mom is the best. She can really multi-task. I am blessed to have such a splendid mom. My mom is my personal chef and I always love to rate her dishes. I always encourage her to have her own cooking show because the dishes she whips up are always beyond expectations. Even without tuition, I have been able to manage so far with her as she has been a good teacher ~~for~~ **(**I think it should be **‘to’)**me. She helps me with anything I am unsure of with regards to my studies. Well, almost anything except for bar modeling. Even so, I realized she bought guide books on bar modeling so we can learn together. How sweet of her. So come 2013, I would really love to have more time with her. I do understand that my baby brothers require more attention with my mom. I really DO understand. I know my mom is trying her very best to find time for me every day. Now that is what I call a daughter’s instinct. Not only mothers have an instinct. I honestly understand her hard life as the babies do not give her any peace. Poor mom. I really care for her so I try to be less annoying so she can refrain from nagging at me and also help out with the boys when I can.

When I say you struggle somewhat with longer sentences, this is a good example of what I mean. Does this sentence mean that you try to be less annoying so your mother can:

1) refrain from nagging at you,

and

2) also help out with the boys when she can?

Mm ambiguous...

Generally, you should try to avoid reusing words within close proximity of each other. It feels... Inelegant...

“I really care for her **and** I try to be less annoying so...”

You notice here that there are a burst of short sentences, most of which start with a noun. While this is perfectly fine, depending on what you want to achieve, you may want to vary your sentence structure in order to improve the flow of the paragraph.

For example, starting with an adverb “Honestly, I am blessed to have such a splendid mom.” or using a dash “...I have been able to manage so far – all thanks to her constant guidance.”

Note to mom : No matter how much you nag at me, I know it is for my own good.

As for my sister whom I mentioned earlier, I just hope the New Year will bring a **change in** ~~new~~ attitude from her. Like being less lazy in her studies, not bullying me (at home or in school!), not bugging me with her constant and irritating singing and play her part at home being a good daughter to mommy and daddy and a good sister to all of us. Especially me. Even though she has been most mean to me, I wish her all the best for the BIG paper next year. You know? The one they call PSLE?

After all the gerunds, “...being less lazy... not bullying me... not bugging me...” you suddenly switch to a verb “and play her part...”. This should not be.

“... not bugging me with her constant and irritating singing, and **playing** her part at home **to be** a good...”

Now about the two annoying twits who take my time away from mom… For the elder, grow up already and go to school, scream less at me (I didn’t do anything to you except love you!) and I hope he does not give me a hard time next year. As for the cute yet troublesome little baby, I hope he sleeps longer! Especially, when I am bonding with mommy. I need bonding time! It is important for a growing girl like me.

I thought it would have been a nice twist if this top student were revealed to be Nadya – which would explain the awkward pause at the very start of the essay.

As you probably know, narratives that come full circle have a sort of satisfying feel to them. Why? Why indeed...

Use a dash here.

“I hope he sleeps longer – especially when I am bonding with mommy!”

Does not connect to the earlier part of the sentence.

Last but not least, ME! I will work harder to improve my studies even if I cannot beat the top student. My aim is to get Band 1 for all my subjects, if possible. I hope not to waste time cleaning up my room all the time which means I have to maintain the cleanliness of my room. I would like to be more responsible, to be less annoying (like I can?) and spend time with my love ones especially with my grandparents whom I affectionately call, ‘gramps’.

No! You started the essay well, so end the essay well! Keep your focus – do not let silly mistakes sneak in.

Note to self - Life is never fair. If there are obstacles that come my way, it is part and parcel of life. My mom once shared with me about overcoming obstacles. That it is not about how hard you fall but about how strong we rise up from the fall that matters.

You call both your grandpa AND grand**ma** ‘gramps’? Hmm...

There is no way to separate my family when I talk about myself because my family is a part of me. So 2013, here we come.

**COMMENTS**

*Generally an ambitious piece. You are attempting nice, long, sentences, which display your finesse in the language. How to make sure they are solid? Read them out to yourself. You should immediately notice awkard-sounding phrasing. This should solve about 70-80% of your grammar problems. Otherwise, remember that if you are talking about a list of things, they all have to be the same type of things. “I love apples, bananas, and walking to school.” In this example, each of the items mentioned are nouns (‘walking’ in this case is a gerund, not a verb).*

*Nevertheless, with all good things in life, balance is the key. Some sentences can be long – but not all of them. At times, you have these really long sentences that ought to be broken up for ease of reading. You will learn to be more sensitive regarding pacing. Pay attention when you read good books. How does the writer control the pace of the story? In action movies, a moment of excitement lasts all of a second or two. In writing, you cannot surprise people like that because of the time it takes to read a sentence. So... How does the writer still manage to surprise/engage you anyway? Hmmm...*

*With regards to the style, be careful: this sort of conversational tone runs the risk of being rambly. You want to be selective with what you include in the essay and what you don’t. Humour is also an amazing tool. Many excellent writers pull this sort of writing off very well; it’s usually done with a wry, understated humour which is absolutely lovely. Appreciation for this, too, will come in time.*

*Regarding content, you display a sense of maturity when it comes to dealing with your family. I personally take pleasure in that, and hope that most of what you wrote was grounded in reality.*