

Scholarship Essay Writing Tips

Most scholarship applications require students to submit an essay. Typically, this essay is autobiographical in nature. Scholarship committees that have a variety of similar applicants look to the essay to differentiate students. Therefore, a succinct, coherent, and interesting essay may be what distinguishes you over another candidate. The following information is essential in writing a successful scholarship essay.

Consider the Topic

- If the essay is asking you to address what motivated you to declare your major, your future career goals, or information that will help reviewers make a well-informed decision, DO NOT submit an essay you wrote for your English class simply because it fits the word limit requirement.
- Think of the essay as a scholarship interview. The major difference is that you do not have the opportunity to convince the committee to give you the scholarship in person, you must convince them with your essay.

Prepare your Facts

- Think about each question the topic is asking and make an outline to fit the topic.
- Make a list of your achievements/accomplishments (both academic and other), community involvement, leadership positions or other roles you have served in organizations, etc.
- Make a list of your personal characteristics including your strengths, weaknesses, and any obstacles you have overcome or are currently confronting.
- Determine 3-5 key pieces of information you feel the committee should know about you and have concrete examples to support and demonstrate your claim.

Writing the Essay

- Begin with a strong introduction. The committee will have a lot of applications to review and not much time to read them. Be sure your introduction draws in the reader and compels them to learn as much as they can about you in the subsequent paragraphs.
- Be personal. Make sure the committee can assess what type of person you are, what motivates you, how have you made your mark on the world thus far, etc.
- Be specific. Cite concrete examples. DO NOT simply tell the committee you are a leader; give an example of how you have been able to demonstrate leadership.

- Turn negatives into positives. If you have an obvious weakness such as limited extracurricular activities, show the committee that you have been particularly involved with your family or within the classes you have taken depending on your personal situation.
- Adhere to standard syntax, grammar, and writing rules. Make sure your body paragraphs relate to your introduction and that your conclusion summarizes the points you have made in your essay.

Review your Essay

- Proofread, proofread, and proofread! One spelling error can disqualify your application.
- Have as many people as possible read your essay and edit it for clarity, conciseness, grammar, and spelling.
- Did you answer the essay topic question?
- Does the essay convey who you are and your motivation for receiving a scholarship beyond the fact that you need the money?
- Is the essay interesting? Does it come alive when you read it?
- Did you provide examples of your skills and abilities rather than broad statements and claims?
- Does the essay meet the word limit requirement?