

How to Write a Scholarship Essay

Finding suitable scholarships is not always an easy task. In the great majority of cases, you will also be asked to write an essay for each scholarship. This is the tricky part of the application process, but if you manage to come up with something extraordinary, it can bring you the desired funds.

The awarding committee is asking for scholarship essays in order to be able to make a general impression about the personality of the person asking for money. A genuine piece of writing is going to tell them more than a standard application form or resume. It is obvious that all candidates try to make the best impression and prove that they are really worth the scholarship. But what does it take to stand out from the crowd and to actually make the committee say "that's the one"? How can you make sure that your scholarship essay will be better than any other? Invest some time and effort into conceiving it, taking into consideration the following aspects and then, most importantly, being honest and original.

Getting Started

Sometimes the hardest part of writing a scholarship essay is getting comfortable with highlighting your accomplishments. Students often see this as bragging about themselves. But this is exactly what you need to do in order to convince the judges that you should receive the scholarship instead of the other applicants. Choice of words is very important. You must be modest and yet brag about your abilities at the same time. You must tell the judges what makes you a better candidate.

Therefore, one of the most important things you have to do when getting ready to write your college scholarship essay is to spend some time reflecting on just how wonderful you really are! When you write down all of the great things you have accomplished, it will be much easier for you to create an essay that conveys your strong point to the judges.

Before you start on your scholarship application and essay:

1. Make a list of all your accomplishments.
2. Develop a list of your school extracurricular activities.
3. Develop a list of your volunteer activities.
4. Write down the three accomplishments of which you are the most proud.
5. Think about a problem you have faced and write down how you were able to overcome the problem.
6. Put in writing your career goals.
7. Put in writing why you want to attend college.
8. Pretend that you had to write a letter of recommendation for yourself. Write down the three most important things you would say.

Tips for Writing a Strong Essay

1. Follow the instructions. In most cases, you will be asked to write on a specific theme or to answer specific questions. Keep those in mind because you won't impress the committee by writing about something else - something they are probably not interested in. Try to identify the underlying questions and answer them. For instance, if you are asked "Why do you want to become an engineer?", the committee actually wants to know what will differentiate you from other engineers, and whether your contribution is going to make a difference in that particular field. More specifically, they want to know why they should give you the money for becoming an engineer. Don't neglect the word-count either. If you are asked to write a 500-word essay, don't send a 2000-word essay. The committee will conclude that you simply cannot follow directions.

2. Relate to the goals and beliefs of the awarding organization. No matter the topic you are writing on, do not forget who you are writing for. For example, if the awarding organization is supporting the role of women in politics, write relative to this goal and avoid expressing a differing opinion.

3. Come up with a good thesis. All scholarship essays need to have a thesis. This fact may sound as though it should be naturally understood, but there are students who ignore this important aspect. Don't expect to be able to come up with your thesis overnight. Dedicate some time to the brainstorming process. Think about anything that might help you: great achievements, people who have influenced you, once-in-a-lifetime happenings, moments of an epiphany, failures that have taught you valuable lessons, extracurricular activities or hobbies that show your passion in one field or another, etc. Once you have a thesis, try to summarize it in one sentence (ex: Women Can Contribute Significantly to Politics). If you can't summarize it as such, then you need to reconsider the thesis and make it clearer.

4. Personalize your scholarship essay. The committee does not want to read general ideas and universal truths. They want to know you better, to find out how you think and how you feel about a certain topic. Don't just say Engineering Can Change the World. They already know this and they know that you know it. Instead, explain how you reached this conclusion (ex: you received a model rocket when you were a child and you developed a passion for engineering) and how you believe you can contribute to the engineering field. The committee will appreciate you more if you share a relevant personal experience. They will relate to your story and will understand what makes you different from the other candidates.

5. Be passionate and honest. The committee has probably read lots of impersonal and boring scholarship essays. Coming across a passionate and enthusiastic one will definitely impress them in a positive manner. It's not difficult to show passion if you are really interested in the field which you want to win the scholarship. Don't be afraid to let your enthusiasm show. Honesty is another key point in writing a successful essay. Bragging a little is not bad because, after all, you want to prove yourself worthy. However, don't exaggerate

and don't repeat the achievements and accomplishments that you've mentioned on your resume or application form. Only write about that which helps to support your thesis. Focus primarily on these and don't neglect to provide relevant details.

6. Keep an optimistic and positive tone. Most candidates who need money in order to continue their education are tempted to come up with impressive stories about their hard life. Numerous scholarship essays focus on describing pitiful situations. There is nothing wrong with facing financial difficulties, but try to come up with an optimistic essay. After all, you want to be awarded a scholarship because of your merits and not out of pity. Try to emphasize the lessons you learned from every negative experience and transmit positive energy.

7. Pay attention to the language, the spelling and the grammar. Every single sentence in your essay should be read several times, analyzed and then re-analyzed. This is not the place for "fluffy" words, and everything you say should support the main thesis of your essay. It goes without saying that spelling and grammar errors can disqualify you from the scholarship race in no time.

8. Don't neglect the scholarship essay format. If you have formatting instructions, follow them. If you don't, make sure your essay has an adequate format (ex: a readable font like Arial or Times New Roman, double-spacing, a font size of 10 or 12, one-inch borders, etc.). Generally speaking, a good essay has about three to four paragraphs.

9. Proofread, proofread and then ask someone else to proofread for you. Once the scholarship essay is done, you tend to relax. There is one more important step: proofreading. Do this several times. Proofread it once, and then take a break to clear your mind before proofreading it again. Also, ask as many people as you can to read your essay. They might notice things that you have skipped and they might come up with useful suggestions.

10. Be original. Don't plagiarize any other scholarship essay. While it is acceptable to read some samples in order to make a good impression, it is completely forbidden to copy someone else's essay.

General Essay Format

Some essays will have a specific format to follow. If so, follow the format instructions. Otherwise, here are suggestions for organizing your essay in four simple paragraphs.

First Paragraph. This is your introduction. Make it good! You want to capture the reader's attention from the start. You may include your major and career goals. End with what makes you the best candidate for the scholarship. For example, "I believe that I am the best candidate for this scholarship because (you complete the sentence)".

Second Paragraph. Why are you the best candidate? What have you done so far? This is where you begin to support your case. Why did you choose to attend college? How did you choose your major? What are your positive qualities, accomplishments, work experience, internships, volunteer work, leadership experience, extracurricular activities, personal problems you have overcome, etc? Let the scholarship committee know that your goal is realistic, and that you are well on your way to achieving your goals.

Third Paragraph. What are your future plans? Be specific about your plans for pursuing your goals. Where do you plan to attend? What is the highest degree you plan to achieve? How do you plan to use your education to achieve career goals?

Fourth Paragraph. Make sure your conclusion brings it all together. Begin by restating what makes you the best candidate for the scholarship. This should be a simple one or two sentence summary of the key points from paragraphs 2 and 3. Then explain how you will benefit from the scholarship. How will this scholarship help you to continue towards achieving your goals? Finally, thank the scholarship committee for the opportunity to be considered for the scholarship.