

TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

The scholarship essay gives you the chance to show your personality and what you're most proud of in life. Your scholarship application should inform, but your scholarship essay should *persuade*. The scholarship committee will read hundreds of essays, so making your application stand out from the rest is crucial.

Here are a few tips that can bring your scholarship application to the highest level!

Create a Strong Introduction

Since the introduction is what draws the committee into your essay and convinces them to keep reading, a strong introduction is one of the most important elements of your essay. Instead of starting off with a general overview, why not hook the committee with a surprising first line?

For example, which of these two opening lines pulls you into the story more? Which one makes you want to keep going?

- My family immigrated to the United States in 2010.
- It was 2010, my family immigrated to the United States, and my life was about to change.

The second sentence gives the reader something to look for; it makes them curious about not only how your life changed during your trip but also why it changed. It gives the readers unanswered questions, and they must keep reading to find the answers.

Overall, you'll want to give the committee a quick preview of what they can expect from your essay – think of it like the written version of a movie trailer. Why should they keep reading?

Keep a Good Structure

After the introduction, it's important to make sure that the committee can follow along with your essay without too much effort. Creating a basic outline is a great way to make sure this happens.

To create an outline, first organize your thoughts. Write down the main points that you want to cover in your essay. Next, organize those thoughts into various sections: introduction, body, and conclusion. Your ideas can either be in sentence form, short phrases, or simple words. Lastly, make sure your ideas flow in a logical order and, if necessary, add more detail under each point.

Also, try to avoid going off on a tangent by taking the time to determine which information is relevant and which isn't. Similarly, consider just how much detail you should include. Providing some detail can make your point clearer or more compelling, but too much detail can bog down your essay.

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Show Emotions

Connecting with a committee through writing can be challenging but, when done right, it can create a very powerful connection between the committee and the applicant. Showing your emotions is a great way to do that and to get the committee personally invested in your essay. Showing emotion can help the committee see you as a person, rather than a faceless applicant.

We all have vulnerabilities, so don't be afraid to show them. Scholarship committees don't expect you to be perfect and want to see how you've grown as a person and handled the obstacles that life has thrown your way. In fact, opening up about times when you felt nervous or scared demonstrates maturity and self-awareness – two great qualities for a scholarship applicant to have.

Use Real Life Examples (“Show, don't tell”)

Instead of telling your reader about your experiences, show them. Provide real-world examples of your experiences and/or how you've changed as a person.

Consider the difference between these two passages explaining why the scholarship applicant wants to pursue a career in science:

Version 1:

I have always been interested in science, even from a young age. Since my family supported my interest enthusiastically, I continued to pursue it throughout school. As I've gotten older, though, my scientific endeavors have become increasingly complex.

Version 2:

Too young to enter the school science fairs, I looked to my family for examples. Force-feeding different animal food to my siblings and parents, I graphed their favorite types. While I was only six, my family has never forgiven me; my “experiments” remain the family joke. Nevertheless, I have progressed from my dog food days, leaving taste tests for DNA gel electrophoresis experiments.

Which is more engaging? While Version 1 explains things and may be well-written, it's a bit boring, right? Version 2 makes the subject come alive and showcases the applicant's personality. That's the power of examples and “show, don't tell.”

Keep the Tone Inspirational and Positive

One of the most important scholarship essay tips is based entirely on your perspective and tone. Nobody wants to read a depressing and self-pitying story. Even if you're writing about difficult or sad events in your life, try and keep the tone positive and inspirational. Rather than just writing about how you were negatively affected by an event, focus on how you grew from the experience and overcame the obstacle.

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Stay Away from Dreary and Boring Conclusions

Most people use the conclusion to simply paraphrase their entire essay, but don't be afraid to think outside of the box. Do something surprising and innovative. Make your essay interesting and attention-grabbing from the first letter until the last period.

One great way to bring your conclusion to the next level is to leave your readers with an interesting question for them to think about.

Proofread and Ask for Help

It's important to take the time to proofread your essay. One great way to find mistakes is to read your essay out loud. Once you've taken the time to proofread your own essay a few times, have someone else do it for you. Asking a family member or friend for help can provide you with a different perspective on your writing and a second set of eyes might catch a mistake that you didn't.

Good Luck! Thank you for your interest in our scholarship program.