

## Scholarship Essay Tips

Writing a scholarship essay can be a real challenge – trying to balance the personal and the academic, remaining professional while being sincere, and above all else presenting yourself in the best possible light. Below are some tips to help you highlight your achievements, while still writing a successful essay.

### **Research the scholarship**

While this may seem like extra work, tailoring each essay you write to the specific scholarship you're applying for can increase your chances of receiving an award. Knowing the basics of the scholarship is just the first step; you may also want to research the company or organization that is sponsoring the scholarship and tie in relevant information. Many organizations will want to know why you are applying for their specific scholarship. Often, any information you can link between the goals of that organization and your own dreams can elevate your essay.

### **Consider your audience**

This works best if you know a bit about the scholarship and the committee who might be reading your application. Even if you don't have that information, consider this: you're submitting an essay to a complete stranger, hoping that they read your work and decide to award you money based on your past achievements. In short, you need to sell yourself, and you may need to package yourself differently for each scholarship you apply for. Some may want the focus to be on your academic success, others will be interested in your civic engagement, and still others may want to hear about a specific cultural or personal aspect of your life. Be sure to focus your essay to the scholarship requirements.

### **Put your best foot forward**

While focusing your essay on these requirements also consider leading with your most impressive and most relevant achievement. Consider that the scholarship may receive hundreds or even thousands of applicants each year. You want to do everything in your power to make your essay stand out and to make the job easier for your reader. Thus, give the pertinent information up front. Frame your achievements in a way that directly relates them to the goals and requirements of the scholarship committee.

### **Use personal stories to emphasize your achievements**

A scholarship essay is no time to be humble; make sure to include all relevant accomplishments and awards in your writing. However, instead of simply listing those achievements, try to expand upon a few of them with a personal story. Pick aspects of yourself you are proud of and relate them to your accomplishments. Don't just tell; instead, show what you've learned and how you've grown. This can work equally well when you need to address a certain lack of achievement, especially one the scholarship committee will receive information on. This can include low GPAs, low standardized test scores, and other statistical information. Instead of dwelling on your shortcoming, address the mistake, explain what you've learned, and tell how you applied that knowledge to better your future.

### **Be creative**

Find your voice. This is your opportunity to sell yourself, to convince complete strangers to help you pursue your collegiate dreams. They deserve to hear the real you. Your essay should be well written and follow standard conventions of English, but that doesn't mean it has to be boring. Incorporate a memorable story or event, give relevant personal history, and above all else, find a voice that is unmistakably you.