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Scholarship Essay Tips

Applying for scholarships would be a piece of cake if it wasn't for the essay, which often forces us to reflect on ourselves, who we are as people, and what we've accomplished so far in life. While it can be the most difficult part of the application, it's also the most important part.

The scholarship essay is your chance to make a case for yourself and to show the committee why you deserve to win. It 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*. Scholarship committees read hundreds, or even thousands, of essays, so making your application stand out from the rest is crucial.

But how?

Luckily, you don't need perfect writing skills to make it happen. With a few scholarship essay tips and tricks in mind, you can easily bring your scholarship application to the next level.

The Planning Phase

1. Plan Far in Advance

If you wait until the last minute to write your scholarship essay, the quality will likely suffer. To make sure that you have enough time for the planning phase, create a calendar with the deadlines for all the scholarships you want to apply for. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time for brainstorming and proofreading!

2. Know Your Audience

The best way to give the scholarship committee what they're looking for is to actually know what they're looking for. Figure out who their ideal candidate is and how you fit into that picture. But be careful not to cater to their expectations *too* much.

Don't sacrifice your voice and personality to fit the bill. Rather, take a look at your strengths and then determine how you can spin them to become the ideal candidate.

3. Follow the Instructions

It might seem like one of the more obvious scholarship essay tips, but many applicants make their first mistake before they even begin – they don't read the directions.

Exceeding (or not meeting) the word count can hurt your chances since it shows that you didn't prepare your essay as well as other applicants. Also, double check to make sure you're responding thoroughly to all parts of the prompt and that you're following the correct scholarship essay format.

4. Choose a Topic That You're Interested In and Passionate About

Your topic can have a heavy impact on how well your essay turns out. If you choose a topic that bores you, you'll likely bore your reader too! Try and choose a topic that you're passionate about or that interests you in some way rather than a topic that you feel you *should* write about – that way your personality and excitement can shine through in your writing!

The Writing Phase

5. Create a Strong Introduction

Since the introduction is what draws the reader into your essay and convinces them to keep going, it should be one of the [strongest parts of your essay](#). Instead of starting off with a general overview, why not hook your reader in 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 first time traveling abroad was during a family vacation to Mexico in 2010.

It was 2010; I had just crossed the border into Mexico 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 have to keep reading to find the answers.

Overall, you'll want to give your reader 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?

6. Keep a Good Structure

After the introduction, it's important to make sure that your reader 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 definitely 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 – whatever you prefer! Lastly, make sure your ideas flow in a logical order and, if necessary, add more detail under each point. [Check out this source for more information.](#)

Also, try to avoid going off on a tangent by trying to take the time to determine [which information is relevant and which isn't](#). If it makes it easier, try creating a basic scholarship essay outline before you start writing.

7. Show Emotions

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

faceless author. Even though it's crucial, it's one of the scholarship essay tips that people tend to ignore the most.

We all have vulnerabilities, so don't be afraid to show them. Likewise, write about your passions and the forces that drive you to succeed in life. 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 where you felt nervous or scared demonstrates maturity and self-awareness – two great qualities for a scholarship applicant to have.

8. Use Real Life Examples

Instead of *telling* your reader about your experiences, *show* them. Don't be afraid to provide real-world examples of your experiences and/or how you've changed as a person. Nearly every applicant will have a somewhat similar response to the essay prompt and your personal examples are your chance to transform your essay from generic to unique.

9. Keep the Tone Inspirational & 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.

10. Stay Away from Dreary & 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. For more ideas, [check out these helpful tips](#).

The Editing Phase

11. Proofread and Ask for Help!

As much as we like to believe that we're perfect, we all make mistakes...which is why it's so important to take the time to proofread your essay. One great way to find mistakes is to read your essay out loud. For more ideas, [check out these helpful tips](#).

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.

12. Take Advantages of Resources

When it comes to writing, you don't have to do it completely on your own. If you're in college, most schools have a writing center that offers free feedback and guidance to students. They might even have some insightful scholarship essay tips that you (or we!) didn't think about. Some high schools, communities, or libraries might also have similar services.

Other than that, the internet can be a great source of information. If you have a specific question, try doing a simple Google search. Also, one of the best writing resources out there for students of all ages is the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). [Check it out here.](#)

What else?

13. Reuse Essays When Possible!

While it might seem impossible to write a new essay for every scholarship application, [you don't necessarily have to](#). A lot of scholarships use very similar essay prompts – meaning you can either use the exact same essay or slightly change it rather than writing a new one altogether. Plus, reusing essays allows you to put more time into perfecting one or two essays.