

Writing Great Scholarship Essays: A How-To

There is an overriding notion within the professional world that today's crop of students are not able to write as effectively as they should. This is only one of the reasons why the scholarship essay has gained so much recognition within the college recruitment process. More than ever, college admission boards and scholarship committees are looking for students with the ability to communicate effectively through the written word.

Picking the Topic

The topics for scholarship essays vary widely from college to college. Some colleges have pre-selected topics that they require all of their applicants to write about, while others give applicants some leeway and allow them to choose their own specific topic within a specified, broader range. Regardless, you will find that virtually all colleges and universities wish for the scholarship applicant to write an essay that will illustrate his or her own unique qualities and talents, and will allow the board to understand why they should award a scholarship.

However, some students find it difficult to put into words exactly why they are special or why they should be awarded with a scholarship. This is totally natural - after all, not everyone is a complete egomaniac! The following tips will allow you to narrow your focus on your special qualities and abilities, and thus increase your chances of receiving a scholarship.

Brainstorming Tips

If you are given the option of choosing your own topic to illustrate your merits for a scholarship, the following tips should help you decide which route to take. These are by no means the only angles available, but they can give you an idea of what to consider.



• CONSIDER YOUR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The extracurricular activities you choose to engage in during high school can tell a scholarship board a great deal about you as a person. By focusing upon your extracurricular activities, you are able to illustrate your personal priorities and let the advisory board know what you consider to be important. For example, if you are applying to a university with the intentions of eventually enrolling in medical school, discussing your volunteer time at the nursing home and explaining how much it affected you personally could be a great essay angle. If you are going to college to study Latin, be sure to include your three years as the head of your school's Latin Club. Think hard and you are sure to find some relation between your activities and your chosen path of study.

• HIGHLIGHT YOUR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

If you did not happen to be involved in any extracurricular activities that are relevant to your future schooling, perhaps you can focus on what you consider to be your major accomplishment. This does not even have to be school related, as long as it somehow illustrates how you are a talented, hard-working individual that deserves a scholarship.

• DISCUSS A PARTICULAR DIFFICULT ADVERSITY YOU OVERCAME

By adopting this essay angle, you can illustrate to the awards committee that you are the type of person that will not fold when the going gets tough. However, if you choose to adopt this angle, do not take too much of a "woe is me" angle. What is very important -- remain positive.

Other Writing Tips

Allow Yourself Enough Time: The amount of time needed to put together a quality essay varies from person to person, but as a general rule, you should allow yourself at least 2 weeks of time to write your scholarship essay. After all, this essay will be one of the more important pieces you'll write in your academic career.

Edit, Edit, Edit

You want your scholarship essay to flow as smoothly as possible. Remember, there is a prevalent idea among today's professionals that today's crop of students cannot write as well as they should. By having a smooth, well-edited essay, you increase your chances of being selected for a scholarship.

Proofread

Just as stated above, don't let silly, sloppy mistakes lead the scholarship award's board to believe that you are just "another one of those students who can't write as well as they should." Proofread your entire essay, multiple times.