

Improve your chances of earning scholarships



Write a *GREAT* scholarship essay

Follow these helpful tips

When you write your essays, you are making choices. The way you choose to write reflects your power of persuasion and organization, style, and master of written English. These essay-writing tips are suggestions made by counselors, writing teachers, and scholarship experts. If you choose to pay attention to them, you will increase your chances at writing an award-winning essay.

Brainstorm your ideas. Brainstorming methods include webbing, outlining, paragraph piecing or a combination of methods that work best for you. Don't hold back. Often your best ideas come after warming up your brain – the topic you choose for your essay could be your 30th, 50th, or 100th idea.

Scholarship essays usually ask questions in one of three categories: “Tell us about yourself,” “Why are you applying to us?” and the “creative” question. Ask yourself questions to search out personal qualities and experiences that can be used as essay topics.

Choose your Topic. After you've finished brainstorming, you need to select your topic. Have you selected a topic that describes something of personal importance? Is your topic a gimmick? Is your topic overdone? Will your topic repeat information you listed elsewhere on your application? Can you fully answer the question asked? Can you keep the reader's interest? Will a reviewer remember your topic? Will your topic turnoff a large number of people? When writing about diversity, don't simply state which diversity group you fall into – talk about your own personal qualities and address how diversity will contribute to the realm of campus opinion, the academic environment, and the larger society. Don't mention any weaknesses unless you absolutely need to explain them away. These are all things to consider.



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Writing the Essay.

- ✓ Use the active voice.
- ✓ Don't "thesaurize" your composition. Big words are fine but only if they are used appropriately.
- ✓ Use imagery and clear, vivid prose.
- ✓ Think small. Undertake a manageable bit of narration or reflection. Don't try to tell everything.
- ✓ Always remember – essays must have beginnings, middles, and endings.
- ✓ Use transitions within and between paragraphs to preserve a logical flow.
- ✓ Don't simply summarize in the conclusions. Do not use stock phrases like "in conclusion, in summary, to conclude, etc."
- ✓ Frame your discussion within a larger context – show that your topic has broad appeal.
- ✓ Use "I plan to..." rather than "I think I'd like to..." when discussing goals.
- ✓ Direct quotes give personality. For instance, if you are writing about the influence your grandmother had on you, try recalling something she said that was important to you.
- ✓ Omit all clichés.
- ✓ Write from your heart and your experience. Never, ever make anything up.
- ✓ Be yourself, express your own voice – your audience wants a picture of you, not a picture of what you think they are looking for.
- ✓ Don't be overly humble.
- ✓ Leave phrases like "I didn't do much in high school", "Next year I plan to do some volunteer work", "I just can't tell you how meaningful that was for me", out of your application.
- ✓ Let at least one other person edit your essay before you submit a final copy.

The Final Product

- ✓ Revise, revise, revise – delete anything in the essay that does not relate to your main argument.
- ✓ Check and double check grammar and spelling. Have someone proofread for you. Don't just depend on the spellchecker. Be especially certain you spell the name of the scholarship correctly.
- ✓ Editing takes time – consider reordering your supporting details, delete irrelevant sections, and make clear the broader implications of your experiences. Allow your more important arguments to come forward.
- ✓ Take implicit points and make them explicit.
- ✓ Your essay must be coherent with a clear and persuasive point.