

# General Scholarship Essay Tips

- **Maintain a positive tone throughout the essay.** You do not want to come across as self-pitying. Focus on ways you learn and grew from past experiences – how they made you stronger.
- **Your scholarship essay is a great place to showcase your eloquence and professionalism,** so (unless directed otherwise), write as you would for a teacher or a boss.
- **Do not diminish other people’s suffering.** This is a competition, but that doesn’t mean you should belittle your competitors. In fact, it would be better to say “I know there are many worthy candidates for this scholarship, but...” rather than “I have suffered far more than...” Show respect in everything you write.
- **Avoid controversial statements and opinions.** When discussing events from your past, do not belittle someone else or talk negatively about a group of people. You never know who will be reading your essay.
- **Tell your story with honesty.** Do not fabricate any details to make yourself sound needy. Your past and present circumstances will speak for themselves.
- **Don’t try to sound philosophical.** Some students will do this because they think it makes them seem smarter, but it rarely has that effect and will often actually cause the opposite effect. Focus on proofreading and writing solid content. That is enough intelligence on its own.

- **Discuss your career goals, if possible.** You may not have room for this if the essay is short. If you do have room though, discussing your career goals will indicate a plan for the future. Review boards reward determination.
- **Print out your paper, read it, and mark it up.** You will notice more errors when reading it this way than on a computer screen.
- **Have friends or parents read it.** A second set of eyes can catch any mistakes you missed.
- **Read it out loud.** This will help with grammar mistakes. If it sounds wrong, it probably is.
- **Proofread, then proofread again!** Proofread, edit and repeat as necessary. Reviewing is critical to composing a great essay. Some teachers won't even finish reading essays if they're not grammatically sound or riddled with spelling errors.
- **Analyze the essay prompt.** The most important step in writing a scholarship essay is to fully comprehend what the prompt is asking. You can write an eloquent response, but your effort will not matter if you ultimately avoid the question the scholarship committee is asking. Scholarship questions are well thought out and are designed in order to garner certain information about candidates. You want to make sure you address the main request.

- **Make an outline.** By constructing an outline, you can plan out what information you want to include and how you want your essay to flow. Make sure to use the essay prompt as the basis for your outline.
  
- **Begin with the body, not the introduction.** Most of the time when you begin to form an idea for your essays, it is typically more general than what you would start your essay with. Instead of starting with the introduction, try starting with the body of your text, it can be an easier task to complete. Once you have fully formed thoughts and ideas, you can then go back and it will be easier to incorporate the information from the body of your text into your introduction and conclusion.
  
- **Take out all conjunctions** (aren't, don't, couldn't, etc.). This will make your paper longer and is more appropriate for academic writing.
  
- **Make the introduction and conclusion brief.** In the introductory paragraph, you give the financial aid committee a snapshot of who you are. In order to structure your essay in an easy to read manner, remember to have the three main parts clearly written: the introduction, the body of the essay and the conclusion. *An easy way to remember how to format the information is to:*
  1. **Tell them what you're going to tell them.** In the introduction you are going to *briefly* introduce what you are going to tell them in the body. This section will be just a quick overview of the information they will read in the body.

**2. *Then you will tell them.*** In the body you will fully address the prompt. This is where you will make your complete and detailed explanation by making all your specific points.

**3. *Then you will tell them what you told them.*** In the conclusion, you will tie all of your main points together and conclude why you would be the best candidate for the scholarship. You should address all your main points, not necessarily specifically, but the general ideas of your specific details. These general ideas should collectively explain your overall reasoning.