

What Should You Include In Your Scholarship Essay?

Analyze the prompt.

What is the essay topic *specifically* asking about? Make sure to include that answer. How can I relate this essay topic to myself or my life?

Explain who you are.

List any special scholarship need groups to which you may belong. Are you the first in your family to go to college? Are you from a disadvantaged family? Are you from an ethnic group that is underrepresented at the school? What are some positive characteristics you have? They're ultimately choosing people to invest in, so they want you to be a *good* person. Characteristics you might want to focus on are empathy, service, leadership, perseverance, or determination. What kind of successes have you had in the past? This is your chance to brag about what you've accomplished so far. What Activities Are You Involved In?

Explain how you are paying for college now.

Let them know you are not ignoring other sources of help. Tell the committee if you are working to help pay college expenses. Detail what steps you have already taken to pay for your education, such as **529 Savings Plan**. This gives the scholarship committee a starting point from which to understand your financial situation.

Explain difficulties you are having in meeting your needs.

A Statement of Financial Need should tell the committee why you are seeking aid. This is the place to talk about any changes that have occurred in your life that impact your ability to pay for your education. For instance, there may have been changes in your family's income, unanticipated expenses or a shortfall in your finances. In this area, you can also provide information to show that you handle funds responsibly. For instance, have you already paid for a semester, or a year, by your own efforts? If you broach this issue, though, include only information about education, and not about unrelated expenses like car loans.

Talk about how you would benefit by receiving the scholarship and why you think you deserve this award.

This may seem obvious, but it is important for the committee to understand that you intend to make good use of the funding. They want to invest in someone who will use the award to its fullest potential. This might

include benefits like being able to concentrate on your studies by not spending so much time working. The funds might also allow you to take an unpaid internship required by your degree.

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Close in a brief and respectful tone.

Do not beg. Avoid emotionalism. Let your tone be professional and polite. Don't use overly flattering or flowery language and no clichés.

Be sure to remember:

Scholarships and financial aid are privileges, not inherent rights; the opportunities that these funds give students are invaluable.

Schools and funding sources have a great responsibility in deciding to whom the awards should go.

A Statement of Financial Need or Scholarship Essays are two tools they use, and it is up to the student to make it as "sharp" as possible.