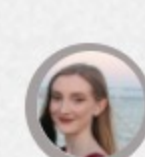


How to Write a Winning Scholarship Essay



By Rebecca Holley | University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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You've nailed your GPA, test scores, and extracurriculars. The only thing left to complete are scholarship applications. The hard part? The scholarship essay.

A scholarship essay is only a piece of the college scholarship application process, but it can cause students a lot of stress. This is your chance to prove to the scholarship committee that you deserve this scholarship. No pressure, right? You want to stand out, but not in a bad way. You need to show them who you are, but you have no idea what to write about.

We consulted the experts for their best advice on how to write a scholarship essay. Read on for insider tips!

1. Write about something that excites you

Whether the scholarship essay calls for an overview of your leadership experience or a funny story from your childhood, find something in the subject that makes you excited. If you're struggling to choose a topic, ask yourself what you're enthusiastic about.

"I recommend that students choose a topic that really interests them and that they have a lot to say about," Janet Heller, author, former professor, and president of the Michigan College English Association, advises. "Enthusiasm and specific details will help you to write a good essay."

2. Don't just show; tell

Focus on the personal impact in the story you're telling and what it means to you. "Most students can describe the event, but they struggle to write about how it changed them," Erin Goodnow, CEO of [Going Ivy](#), says.

Don't just state the facts in your scholarship essay. Use vivid, detailed examples to get your point across. Kim Lifton, President of [Wow Writing Workshop](#), notes, "[Students] tend to write a lot about the experiences, rather than providing insight into these experiences. The committees want to know what they learned, how something affected them, did it change them?"

3. Look on the bright side

Don't be a Debbie Downer. It doesn't matter what tough experiences you've gone through – the reader wants to hear about how you turned it into a positive or how it made you a better person.

"Avoid complaining or sounding like a victim. Even if there are tragic and horrific circumstances, there are many ways to tell a story, and attitude and approach are everything," says Ana Homayoun, who is an author, counselor, and founder of [Green Ivy Educational Counseling](#). "I worked with a young woman who had a particularly challenging life events that included poverty, foster care, relatives who struggled with mental health issues and drug addiction, and she was incredibly successful both in applications for school and scholarship applications because she told her story in a way that did not make her sound like a victim of her life circumstances...Instead, she showed how she grew and reflected on her experiences in a way that demonstrated her maturity."

You don't have to shy away from writing about the hard stuff – you just have to do it right. Always keep it positive and focus on the outcome.

4. Reread and edit your scholarship essay...a lot

It might (literally) cost you. "Spend a lot of time proofreading your essay to catch errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word choice," Heller instructs.

Homayoun also provides another tip: "Have your own personal board of directors (which could include your guidance counselor, trusted friend, mentor, principal, whomever) read and offer comments. Some of the comments might be contradictory or less helpful, so it is also important to filter out comments and use what comments you find helpful and leave the rest."

So, what are college scholarship committees looking for in a scholarship essay?

The people reading your essay are looking for someone smart, driven, hard-working, and mature. Beyond that, they want to see that you can write creatively and be original even when it comes to something as simple as an essay. So show them you can!

Need a break from filling out college scholarship applications and writing scholarship essays? We feel you. Check out our list of easy scholarships in our article [Scholarships That Are Actually Easy to Apply For](#).



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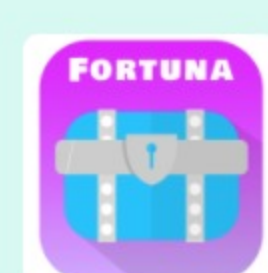
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