

FOUR MISTAKES THAT CAN DOOM YOUR SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION



Rising tuition costs have made funding for college more important than ever, yet students still make avoidable mistakes on their applications.

Even for the smallest of scholarships, committees must dig through dozens (sometimes hundreds) of applications, just to find the right match. In order to consider each application, screeners often develop a short-hand system whereby they automatically reject applications for making obvious errors. As you complete your own application, carefully consider common mistakes, such as:

Saying Too Little...Or Too Much

The application essay is the longest and most influential part of your application. This is the place where you are able to distinguish yourself from all of the other candidates who have similar grades, extra-curricular activities, and leadership roles, but your essay is full of hazards.

The two most frequent gaffes students make are either sharing too little, or too much about themselves. Sharing too little is an issue that is immediately apparent; you didn't put enough in your essay to make an impact on the reader. Worse, the reader may assume that you have nothing to contribute to their school or organization that they reject you outright.

On the other hand, sharing too much is just as dangerous. A deeply personal story that reveals something about who you are today or that shows how you overcame adversity to achieve something worthwhile is good. A personal story that tugs at the heart strings or targets the reader's emotions for no reason comes off as a sob story, and can do more harm than good.

Generally speaking, if the application asks for 200 words, give the reader as close to that mark as you can, without going crazy in either direction. The readers don't want to read novels, nor do they want haikus. Additionally, avoid controversial subjects, like sex or drugs, because those topics have a tendency to be off-putting to some readers.

Appearing Unprofessional

If you're a high schooler or new college student, it's likely that you still have the same old email address that you created when you were 12 or 13. While xxFartmasterXx@gmail.com might have been funny to Junior High you, and might be ok for a gamer tag, it's not the most professional email address you can create. This is the kind of negative first impression that you don't want to make, especially when you are asking strangers to give you money.

Before you submit your application, look for any piece of information that might appear unprofessional to an adult reader. Start with your email address. If you don't have a simple address (ie. yourname@something), go create one, or use your current .edu address from your school. Next, look through your activities, interests, and clubs. Did you list your time as Chief Chugger of the Brew Club or talk about your efforts to start a Pot Club? You might want to consider deleting those lines.

Leaving Blanks

Blank spaces scream from the page, and what they say is never good. The reader looks at your application and wonders "Did she skip that section because she was lazy, or because she had nothing to say?", or "Did he really go through high school without any activities/clubs/leadership etc. ?". Right away your application becomes suspect, and looks a lot less appealing than someone who filled in every line.

Does this mean that you should lie on your application? Of course not, but it does mean that you need to take some extra time and really think about why you plan to leave that space blank. Usually the only reason you would leave one part of the application blank is because you so thoroughly filled another section. For example, if you were captain of the football team, president of the student body, first chair clarinet, and yearbook editor, the reader may be willing to overlook a blank section on clubs or volunteering.

Waiting Until The Last Minute

Putting things off until the last minute is a character trait of high school and college students that's been around for decades. Why do today what can be put off until tomorrow? Right? You might be able to get away with procrastinating on a class project or essay, but you do not want to wait to get started on your scholarship applications.

Readers have seen so many applications that they can usually tell in the first few lines which students took their time, and which students waited until the deadline. Those who took their time have full thought out answers and well-reasoned responses, all free of spelling and grammar errors. Procrastinators typically leave their answers short, so they can make sure they hit every section, or they leave blank spaces. In some cases, they can even see the date and time that you submitted your application.

Any reader or scholarship committee wants to think that you value them and their organization, and aren't just using them as a way to get money. By turning in your application early, or by the priority deadline, you show the reader and committee an extra dose of respect.

In life, you only get one chance to make a first impression, and with a scholarship committee, the first impression is likely the only one you will ever make. Put your best foot forward, let your application stand on its merits, and don't get cast aside simply because you made an avoidable mistake. The NCTC Foundation has more than 200 scholarship opportunities available for NCTC students, and all of those awards are available through a single application. Contact us today and get started on empowering your future.

#NCTC

#NCTCFoundation

#Scholarships