

THREE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY STAND OUT



Scholarship committees receive dozens, if not hundreds of applications a year. The personal statement or essay is your best chance to stand out.

Writing your essay or personal statement portion of a scholarship application is both the most important and the most intimidating step in the process. Though the task may seem daunting, there are five easy things you can do to improve your essay, make it stand out from the crowd, and increase your chances of earning the scholarship.

1. Make It Personal

Scholarship committees see dozens, if not hundreds, of applications for their money. In many cases, the applicants all have approximately the same GPA, career goals, extra curriculars, even level of financial need. The one point of difference between the applicants is their essay.

A great way to create differentiation between yourself and other applicants is to share a story that is directly related to the essay prompt. Not only does your story capture the readers' attention, it also enables you to relate personal details about your unique experience that showcases your individual perspective.

2. Tailor The Essay To Your Audience

If you write a single scholarship essay and paste it into every application that you make, you run the risk of appearing bland and generic. Scholarship committees want to know that you took some time to research their group or organization, beyond the fact that they are awarding scholarships. For this reason, every essay that you write needs to be tailored to the specific characteristics of your audience.

Before you start writing, take a look at the organization's website. Read through their mission statement or statement of purpose, so you can see the traits and ideas that the organization values. A successful essay will incorporate some of those ideas into the text, demonstrating ways in which you feel that you reflect or practice the organization's core values. For instance, at North Central Texas College integrity, innovation, relationships, and encouragement form the backbone of the college mission. The best essays will integrate those keywords to show you did your research before applying.

3. Get A Second Perspective

When people write they often become emotionally attached to their words. In their minds every sentence makes complete sense, and every word choice is exactly right for the situation. The problem is that this attachment can lead to writing blinders that cause you to miss obvious errors in your work.

In a scholarship essay you only have one chance to make a good first impression, so your writing needs to be as polished as possible. Of course you need to proofread your text yourself; however, a second set of eyes can be very revealing. A second reader addresses common editing errors, like:

- **Skipping a word**
- **Confusing different spellings of the same word**
- **Missing punctuation**
- **Making unsupported claims/Using inadequate evidence**

These errors go unnoticed by you, because you know what the sentence is supposed to say, and your mind automatically makes the corrections. Your second reader should be able to spot the errors and help you correct them, before they reach the scholarship application readers.

It takes time and practice to write a good scholarship letter. Fortunately, through the NCTC Foundation scholarships you only need to complete a single essay to be considered for over 200 scholarship opportunities.

Complete your application online today, and let us invest in your success.