



Supporting and promoting lifelong learning through fund raising, advocacy and volunteerism

THE SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

Your essay is **the key** to your scholarship or grant application. It is your chance to show the selection committee that you are worthy of their **investment in you**, that you are **more than your GPA**, and that you are a good writer, which is a communication skill. Communication skills are critical in MULTIPLE life situations! Here are some general pointers about effective essays:

- Effective essays do not have to be long. (If you are given a word limit, stick to it!)
- An attention-grabbing hook immediately captures the reader's interest.
- A strong conclusion that reflects core values and personal philosophy shows emotional maturity and self-reflection.
- Use of lots of short paragraphs with white space in between creates good readability.

I. First Paragraph

- A. **Start with a story** about what led you to your degree path. Personal stories engage the reader and help them to feel that they know you! Revealing a little about yourself helps you connect with the reader. It is critical to make a connection, because you will probably never meet the readers on the scholarship selection committee.
- B. Finish the paragraph with a statement that leads the reader to the next paragraph about what your plans are.

II. Second Paragraph

- A. Now, **talk specifically about your educational plans**. What is your degree plan? What classes have you taken? What do you still have to take? When will you graduate?
- B. Talk about where your educational plans will take you? Will you get an advance degree? What are your career goals?

III. Third Paragraph

- A. **Tell about the resources you have**. *Scholarship committees like to help students who are helping themselves*. Do you have a job? Where do you work? How many hours per week?
- B. Tell about the challenges you face. Tell about challenges you have overcome!

IV. Fourth Paragraph

- A. Start this paragraph with a **specific statement** about how you will use the funds, if awarded. (Be **realistic** and honest! Gas money? Money for books or supplies? Child care?) Use the name of the scholarship, and the amount: *If I am awarded the XYZ Scholarship in the amount of \$500.00, I will use it for.....*
- B. Tie it all up with a strong conclusion: **IN SUMMARY**, what will the grant or scholarship enable you to achieve? Remind them why **YOU** are an outstanding candidate: You have passion, a plan and resources to help you achieve what you want to do!!
- C. Always conclude with a statement of **thanks**. (Thank you for considering me for this opportunity....)

Here are some tips to remember:

- **If you need references, send them a copy of your essay, and ask them NOW.**
- **FOLLOW APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LETTER!** If you are asked to write an essay about a specific theme, stick to the **theme**.
- Don't be shy about showing **passion** in your writing! Let the language you use convey your feelings. Remember, you're making a connection!

- **AVOID TELLING THE SOB STORY!** A common theme students write about is why they need the scholarship money to continue their education. Don't make it a sob story. Don't expect to win if the intent of your essay is to evoke pity. Remember that *every applicant (and many a scholarship reviewer!) has faced difficulties*. What makes you different is how you've overcome difficulties! Scholarship committees are interested in how you've responded to the challenges you faced. This reveals character and shows you to be a **resilient and goal-oriented person**: A great candidate for their **investment!**
- **HAVE A FEW GREAT EDITORS!** Have a trusted friend, teacher, family member or colleague read your essay. Ask them to critique its general content by asking open-ended (rather than yes/no) questions:
DON'T ASK: Did I write a good essay? **DO ASK:** IN your own words, what did the essay tell you about me? (*You don't always convey what you think you are conveying!*) How might I improve the essay's content?
- Have your editors review the essay for technical content. DO NOT RELY ON SPELL CHECK or GRAMMAR CHECK!!! Are proper nouns capitalized? Is every word spelled correctly? Did you use correct grammar?
- **NO LYING. PERIOD.** If you didn't do it, don't say you did.

IN CONCLUSION: As with most things in life, the success of your scholarship search is directly proportional to the effort you put into it. **Don't give up! Apply, apply, apply, and FOLLOW UP!!!** And WRITE A THANK-YOU LETTER TO YOUR DONOR! They will remember you for it, and you may get help from them again!

Please contact me if you would like assistance with editing your scholarship essay. Send essays as **Word documents** to

betsy.wilson@npc.edu

I will do my best to edit your work and return it to you as quickly as possible. To avoid missing a deadline, send your essay to me well in advance of its submission date

Best of luck to you as you continue your education! I am proud of your efforts. You are giving yourself a gift no one can ever take from you.

RESOURCES

- <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa> - A MUST for any student seeking a scholarship! Many applications require information from your FAFSA Student Aid Report, and you may find out you qualify for a Federal Pell Grant, which is money you DON'T have to pay back!
- www.npc.edu/scholarships - NPC maintains this very comprehensive online database of hundreds of scholarship opportunities! Yes, there are a lot you won't qualify for, but there are many for which you WILL be able to submit an application! Treat a scholarship search like a part-time job, and break it down into manageable parts. Apply for one or two scholarships each week.
- www.azfoundation.org/scholarships - The Arizona Community Foundation manages over 90 scholarships. By completing their online application form, you can be matched with those you are qualified for, and the Foundation can assist you in applying!
 - www.ptk.org – AZ All Academic Scholarship
 - www.collegefish.org
 - www.fastweb.org