

Effective Scholarship Application Tips

Essays: The goal of the Scholarship Essay is to provide scholarship evaluators and donors an opportunity to learn more about you as a person beyond your GPA, test scores, and major/degree choice. Your essay allows you the opportunity to help us learn what makes you brilliant and uniquely qualified as an applicant.

Resume: A Scholarship Resume is different from a job resume in that while both contain employment information or histories, the scholarship resume also allows donors to know what you are committed to in terms of community or volunteer service as well as academic awards and honors you've received.

Remember: The Scholarship Resume informs donors of what you are doing. The Scholarship Essay informs donors of who you are.

Scholarship Essays are NOT:

- Resumes: Donors are not looking for a repeat of your resume accomplishments
- Journal entries: There is a clear distinction between personally revealing and intimate details
- Formal essays: Donors are not looking for a scholarly publication. Rather the key here is to strive for a personal tone and voice that conveys sincerity.

Effective Essays:

1. Demonstrate insight

Show who you are, how you think, how you decide to act, how you approach a problem, how you interact with your environment.

2. Demonstrate how you organize and express your ideas

Show a logical progression of your train of thought. Your sentences should relate to each other with smooth transitions between changes in your story or introduction of new ideas.

3. Demonstrate uniqueness

Show your unique attributes. Avoid generic, trite or meaningless statements.

4. Demonstrate effort in the application process

Show that you engaged in the writing process. Seek feedback and assistance from other sources.

5. Demonstrate optimism

Show that you are a worthwhile investment of donor's dollars. Show that you have the attributes necessary to succeed academically and professionally. Now is not the time to bemoan your misfortunes.

Tips for Success:

- Start early. Don't wait until the deadline to write your essay and pull your information together.
- Collect your materials. Make sure you know everything required for the scholarship application.
- Tell a compelling story. Yours!
- Identify what makes you unique. If you don't know, ask your friends, and family.
- Respond to the prompt. Direct your essay to respond to what the donor is asking.
- Relevancy of the award to your life. Look for what the award directly translates to an experience you've had, a goal you hold, or a dream you possess.
- Consider the audience. Don't assume that the scholarship evaluators will have in-depth or insider information if you're addressing a particular interest or area of study.
- Be concise. Succinct, clear, flowing essays that convey your meaning without unnecessary fluff.
- Be honest.
- Tell stories. If it helps explain your point of view.
- Write to be read and enjoyed.
- Be tactful.
- Own your accomplishments. Avoid comparing yourself to other students; rather seek to own what you've achieved.

Content ideas:

- Personal anecdotes, as they relate to the essay topic
- Reasons for applying – beyond “needing the money”
- Future educational/career goals
- Why you are a unique candidate
- Work experiences as they relate to the essay topic
- Mentors – and what they have taught you
- Setbacks and Obstacles – put more emphasis on how you overcame them
- Lessons learned
- Family obligations
- Volunteer work/Community involvement – as it relates to the essay topic

Common mistakes:

- Not answering the question
- Wrong tone/voice
- Listing accomplishments instead of lessons learned
- Repeating information – especially repeating what's in your resume
- Too intimate – balance sharing and professionalism
- False modesty – it's ok to be confident
- Hiding your voice – trying to sound like someone you aren't

Effect Resumes:

1. Are up to date

Reflect who you are today. Donors are interested in what you are currently doing to further your education and grow professionally

2. Are concise

Instead of listing everything you've ever done, highlight the activities that you want the donor to remember you by and list your accomplishments. No paragraphs.

3. Are quantifiable

Note the hours, months, days, and years that you have committed your time to your activities, memberships, work experiences and volunteer efforts.

4. Are relevant to the roles you created

State the relevant leadership roles or activities that you helped create. It's about showing your initiative.

5. Are error-free

Show that you invested the time and effort into a thorough resume and application.

And:

Proof-Read and Spell Check! Don't rely on the spell-check on your word processing program. Have someone else review your resume and essay before you submit it.

For more information on writing personal statements:

UCD Writing Center, Central 206, 303-556-4845,

<http://clas.ucdenver.edu/writing/>

UCD Scholarship Resource Office,
900 Auraria Parkway, Suite 259 Tivoli Student Union
303-352-3608

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/resources/Scholarships/Pages/default.aspx>

UCD Career Center, Tivoli 267, 303-556-2250

CareerCenter@cudenver.edu

"Writing Your Statement of Purpose for Grad School"

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/careercenter/Pages/default.aspx>