

Write a Winning Scholarship Essay

By Leah Hobson

Essay required. Do these words send chills up your spine, and give you a general feeling of nausea? They shouldn't. When applying for a scholarship, the essay section gives you a chance to show the evaluators a little more about you as a person, and set yourself apart from everyone else. Think of it as an opportunity to express your individuality, and give the evaluators one more chance to see just how much you deserve that scholarship.

However, writing the actual essay is never easy. The essay could be on a topic of your choice, an explanation of what you plan to do with the scholarship and how it will help you, or an exercise in creative writing. Whatever the subject, there are some specific rules you should follow in order to write an excellent scholarship essay:

BEFORE YOU START

Read the Directions - Nobody is going to award a scholarship to someone who can't even follow simple directions. Carefully read all instructions before writing anything. Pay attention to word length (500 words means 500 words), type style (single-spaced or double-spaced), and exactly what the question is asking.

Discuss your ideas - The idea for the perfect essay may not hit you right away. Talk it through with your family, friends, or teachers. If the essay asks you to write about yourself, have an informal chat with a friend, and talk about "remember when" situations. You may come across a great experience that you had totally forgotten about.

Choose your focus - It's always better to go for quality rather than quantity. Describe one event or experience in depth, rather than trying to squeeze many stories into one essay. Remember, less is more. Creativity and originality are always a plus, since the readers will probably have read several similar essays. However, above all, be yourself, and be honest.

WRITING THE ESSAY

Start off with a bang - Draw your reader into the essay by starting off in an interesting way. Never say what you're going to discuss, or repeat the original question. Instead of saying "I'd like to tell you about my dog Skippy" (which, by the way, isn't a great essay topic), try something like "As my golden retriever pulled me out of the freezing water, I remembered the first day I had seen Skippy ." Ok, so maybe you don't have a daring rescue story, but you get the point.

Don't Rehash- If you've already filled out other lengthy application forms, your essay isn't the place to repeat what you've already told the readers. It also shouldn't be a simple list of your accomplishments and endeavours. You've heard this before, but show, don't tell. Instead of saying "I'm an energetic, dedicated individual", say what you do that makes you so energetic and dedicated.

Watch your language - Make sure to use clear, concise language, with no slang. Your essay doesn't have to be as formal as an academic paper, but don't use the language you used in the note you passed last period.

AFTER THE FACT

Review, review,