

“Tips and other Information”

Essay Writing Tips

Essay writing can, at times, be an intimidating thing if you don't take the time to understand that it is a process. Sure, there are those gifted few who can write poetry at the first use of a pen. But, for the rest of us, we find ourselves having a vague idea of what we want to say, but don't know how to say it. Here are a few tips to help ease the fear, and stress, of writing an essay.

Introduction

Have you ever started to read something and you're yawning before you get to the second sentence? No one wants to read anything that puts the reader to sleep. Each and every one of you has a story to tell...so get to it and tell it. Don't beat around the bush. Grab your audience's attention so that they want to keep reading what you're about. Donors and universities want to know why they should give you a scholarship. Sure, grade point averages, SAT and ACT scores are important. But, being able to tell who you are and how you will be an asset to that university is what is going to set you apart from everyone else.

Body

So, now you've got their attention – what are you going to do with it? Donors and universities don't have the time to read a novel. By the same token, there is no way they will be able to get a sense of who you are and what you've done in one paragraph, unless of course you're only two years old. Pick out the most important facts about you...ones that you are really proud of. It's ok to brag. The readers of your essay are asking the expert – YOU. Be specific, but don't drown them in detail. Be concise, but don't sell yourself short. Be sure to include, not only what you've done, but also what you are planning to do with your future. What are you going to study? What are your aspirations and dreams? They want to know where you're going and, more importantly, how they can help you get there. This is going to take time and probably more than one draft. Don't groan about this...if someone asked you to work, let's say, eight hours and they would hand you a check for \$1000-\$3000, would you do it? Then get to it.

Closing

You've just explained how bright and shiny you are – now give them something they won't be able to forget. Thank them for taking the time to read your story and remind them again why you should be the recipient of their funds. End it with a bang and you'll be certain to receive some bucks.

Top Ten Tips for Winning Scholarship Applications - - by Kay Peterson

TIP #1: Apply only if you are eligible. Read all the scholarship requirements and directions carefully and make sure that you are eligible before you send in your application. Your application won't make one bit of difference if you aren't qualified to apply.

TIP #2: Complete the application in full. Be sure to complete the entire application. If a question doesn't apply, note that on the application. Don't just leave a blank.

TIP #3: Follow directions. Provide everything that is required. But don't supply things that aren't requested - you could be disqualified.

TIP #4: Neatness counts. Make a couple of photocopies of all the forms you receive. Use the copies as working drafts as you develop your application packet. And always type the application, or if you must print, do so neatly and legibly.

TIP #5: Make sure your essay makes an impression. The key to writing a strong essay is to be personal and specific. Include concrete details to make your experience come alive: the 'who,' 'what,' 'where,' and 'when' of your topic. The simplest experience can be monumental if you present honestly how you were affected.

TIP #6: Watch all deadlines. To help keep yourself on track, impose a deadline for yourself that is at least two weeks prior to the stated deadline. Use this 'buffer time' to proofread your application before you send it off.

TIP #7: Take steps to make sure your application gets where it needs to go. Before sending the application, make a copy of the entire packet and keep it on file. If your application goes astray, you can always reproduce it quickly. Make sure your name (and social security number, if applicable) appears on all pages of the application. Pieces of your application may get lost unless they are clearly identified.

TIP #8: Give it a final 'once-over.' Proofread the entire application carefully. Be on the lookout for misspelled words or grammatical errors. Ask a friend, teacher or parent to proofread it as well.

Tip #9: Ask for help if you need it. If you have problems with the application, do not hesitate to call the funding organization.

Tip #10: Remember - your scholarship application represents you! Your ability to submit a neat, timely, complete application reflects on you. It's your face to this organization. Take pride in yourself by submitting the best application you can.

Scholarship Tips

What Do Committees Look For? There are no common items that every member of all committees look for. However, there are some items that the majority of committee members look for when evaluating a scholarship application. The following are a list of those items.

Neatness Whether consciously or subconsciously, most committee members will show more favor toward an application that is presented in a more clear and concise manner. This does not mean that handwritten essay are forbidden, but it does mean that the majority of reviewers would prefer a typed essay. All paperwork should be consistent in size to the extent possible. All documentation that is submitted should have the applicant's name and/or ID number clearly indicated on the paperwork.

Achievement Belonging to a social or academic organization is one thing, but attaining success within the organization shows distinction. That is, it is good to belong to the track team but better to win city or state honors on the track team. It is good to belong to the National Honor Society but better to serve as president to treasurer of the NHS.

Consistency/Improvement The applicant should show a gradual progression in all things. There should be a trend of getting better in all areas. If a student is already number one in his/her class or has a 4.0, then they should remain consistent. Otherwise, committees would expect the candidate to show improvement from the freshman year to the senior year.

Ethics/Values/Morals There is no specific accomplishment that can fulfill this category. It is exhibited in different areas. Committees look for the applicant who does something extra—something that is not achievement oriented yet reflects their own values, i.e. doing volunteer work at the local hospital, holding down a part time job, participating in a neighborhood clean-up campaign, helping out a local nursing home, tutoring, etc.

High standards/determination Reflected in grades, test scores, recognition of others as mentioned in letters of recommendation, career and life goals as reflected in essays and overcoming adversity (personal, economic, social) in the past.

Individuality/Independence This can be reflected in many arenas. The format and content of some essays reflect individuality. This is often reflected in humorous essays. Working for all four years of high school shows independence. Creating or leading an organization shows initiative and independence. Individuality and creativity are often reflected in the applicant's style in his/her application.

How Do Students Enhance Their Chances? An applicant can do many things to enhance his or her chances for receiving a scholarship. Here are some of the most common:

- Apply early.
- Submit a complete application that is easy to read and well organized.
- Do not be redundant in essays. If the application itself requests that you list your achievements and accomplishments, do not restate those same items in the context of the essay unless you feel that additional information is needed.
- Name association. It is a good idea to contact the school/scholarship committee either in person or over the phone or by e-mail at least once. Most students will do this during their summer orientation visit. Committee members tend to recall the names of individuals who take the time to visit or write letters. Name recognition is important.
- Slingshot effect. There is a fine line between name recognition and name repetition. A constant badgering of individuals in writing or by phone may have a slingshot effect on an

applicant's chance of receiving an award (this includes parents). For those applicants who are borderline recipients, this difference is a risk they should not take. An applicant should always follow their application closely. Three to four contacts would be the average for most individuals.

- Comparative shopping. Most scholarship committees will not counter-offer or outbid the offer you have received at another school. Keep in mind that if you were already considered a great student, in relation to others at that school, then you would have already been contacted. Schools differ in the criteria they use for scholarships consideration. Therefore the receipt of a \$10,000 scholarship at one school would not mean an equal scholarship at other schools at which you have applied. Also, early notification tends to go out from schools that competitively recruit scholars. Schools that do not historically recruit scholars usually do not make offers as early as those that do.
- Stand out in a crowd. What makes a student's application different from the other 5,000 that have been submitted? Why is your phone call any different from those of the other 100 callers? Do something that will make your application stand out. Wear something unique during your visits to campus. Individuality is the key.
- Do you need to apply for financial aid in order to help your scholarship chances? It won't hurt. Some scholarships are need-based and some are not. Some scholarships look at both academics and need, and still others use financial need as a tiebreaker. In no situation will the application for financial aid hurt your chances at receiving a scholarship. However, failure to complete a financial aid application where financial where financial need is considered is definitely a detriment.

Be Realistic This is probably the most difficult thing to learn. It is a natural tendency for parents to think of their sons and daughters as the best. They tend to overlook achievement in others and not give credit where it is due. For example, parents who consider their son or daughter to be the best may believe that if they don't receive a scholarship then it must be due to some oversight on a committee's part.