



The Personal Essay:

Writing an Effective Personal Scholarship Essay

By

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Overview:

- The place for students to distinguish themselves
- An important part of the application
- Let's committees know who applicants are
- What aspects of the applicant's life make them ideal
- It must be submitted with the application

The Importance of the Essay

- Purpose:

- gives the opportunity to tell aspects of the student's background that may not be apparent from other parts of the application

- to provide insight about the applicant on a personal level

- In decision making, committees consider:

- personal attributes

- academic record

- financial need

The Importance of the Essay



■ Goals:

- think about the essay in terms of what you want to achieve and what you want to avoid

- "sell" yourself in the essay

- "read" yourself for the committee

- explain why you are the "ideal" candidate for the scholarship

- stand out from the crowd, show off your strengths, leadership, how you overcame challenges and barriers, achieved success, and grown as a person and more capable student

Writing the Essay

■ Begin

--carefully read the instructions

--instructions provide:

- * essay format and content
- * reading audience
- page limitations and rules

Writing the Essay

- Give yourself plenty of time:
 - recognize the importance of the essay
 - difficulty of the task
 - follow the steps of the writing process
 - employ time management to produce a thoughtful essay



Characteristics for the Essay



- Creativity, Rare talent
- Intellectual curiosity
- Achievement, Exceptional recognition
- Ability to overcome hardship
- Initiative, Motivation, Leadership, Persistence
- Service to others
- Special Spark

Characteristics of the Essay



- Approaches/Brainstorming:

- prompt: I used to be_____, but now I'm _____.

- take certain episodes of your life and explain how these episodes make you the right person for the committee

- think of how you would bring a friend who you haven't seen for a few years up to date on your life

- identify current goals and aspirations

- evaluate how you have grown in the last 5 years

- what has inspired and fired your imagination

- summarize exciting adventures

Brainstorming

Something About My
NAME:

My ACHIEVEMENTS:

What I Want to
ACCOMPLISH:

Transfer, Major, Career,
Bucket List

EMBARASSING MOMENTS:

Characteristics of the Essay



- **Development of Character**: Who are you? What are your passions? What life skills have you mastered? How do you respond to adversity?
- **Educational Goals**: Why do you want a degree? What do you want your life to be like and how will school facilitate that? What do you want to learn more about? How will the education process contribute to your life goals?
- **Community**: What is your sense of an individual's responsibility in the world? What have you done to make a contribution to the world? What are your values? What is your sense of responsibility to your community, school, family, city, and humanity?

What to Avoid

- An essay to avoid is one that lists information
 - adds little to the understand of who the individual is
 - tells what you do, not who you are
 - descriptive rather than interpretive
- One that is predictable and one-dimensional
 - too common it doesn't distinguish itself
 - examples—My Summer Trip, I Learned from Sports, the the D's: Determination, Discipline and Desire, I've always wanted to be a _____

What to Avoid

- Don't necessarily reject these topics. You may be successful if you:
 - discuss a wide range of activities that conveys a sense of a broad interest and abilities that reveals something about you
 - elaborate on the insights gained from the experience
 - evaluate how the experiences influenced your outlook, activities, commitment or goals

Organizing the Essay

- Paragraph 1: **Introduction**
- Grab the reader's attention.
 - I am a first generation college student.
- Introduce yourself to the committee/provide basic background information about yourself.
 - My parents met working in the fields and strived for their children to have a better life than physical labor.

Organizing the essay

- Paragraph 2: **Challenges/Obstacles OR Meaningful Volunteer, Leadership, Internships, Work Experience**
- Share examples of obstacles you have overcome or a challenge you are currently facing.
- Provide specific information (for example):
 - In addition to being enrolled as a full time student, I also volunteer 10 hours a month and have an internship with Sanger Unified School District.
- What did you learn from the experience?
- How has the experience affected or changed your life? (Don't lead them with sob stories. Be honest)
- If you prefer, you can write about any volunteer, leadership, internship, or work experience that has been significant in your life.

Organizing the essay

- Paragraph 3: **Career Goals**
- What is your career goal?
 - I want to be a college English Professor to teach literature from my cultures while empowering students from underrepresented groups.
- Include detailed information about what you want to do (and why).
- If you are debating between 2 careers, let them know which ones and the reasons why you are undecided (why do you like each one?).
- Did any volunteer, leadership, internship, or work experience help you discover your interest in this career? A significant experience?
- If you don't know what career you want to pursue, skip to paragraph 4.

Organizing the essay

- Paragraph 4: **Educational Goals**
- What is your educational goal?
 - I want to earn a bachelor's degree in English and then obtain a master's degree in English Composition.
- Include detailed information about what you want to do (and why).
- Include what schools you are considering or are transferring to in the future.
- Did any volunteer, leadership, or work experiences help you discover your interest in this major? Significant experiences?
- If you find its more convenient, you can combine your career and educational goals into one paragraph.

Organizing the essay

- Paragraph 5: **Conclusion**
- Summarize the main points of the essay.
- Why are you the best candidate for a scholarship?
- Remind them why its so important for you to go to college.
- Why do you feel it is so important for you to get a degree?
- How will you give back to the community?
- Explain why you need the money. (How would this scholarship help you?)

Conclusion

- Remember, no matter what you choose to write about, your essay needs to provide an answer to this basic question:

What do we (the selection committee) know about you (the applicant) as an individual?