

WRITING A SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY: Instructions and A Sample Essay

Your scholarship essay is a very important part of your application. Through your essay the selection committee is able to see you as more than a GPA or major. A well-written essay allows you to single yourself out from the other scholarship applicants.

STEPS IN WRITING THE ESSAY:

1. **Develop a good resume to use as an outline for your essay. (A resume is not required to apply for scholarships.)** This will help you to organize your essay. Each part of the resume corresponds to a paragraph in the essay.
2. **With some modifications, you can use the headings for the resume as the basis for the different paragraphs of the scholarship essay. These include:**
 - o goals
 - o education work experience and volunteer experience
 - o skills and special knowledge, special projects you have completed
 - o life experiences that have motivated you or have demonstrated your ability to overcome obstacles and challenges successfully
3. **Start with a strong thesis or umbrella statement outlining your goals, and indicating the main categories you will be discussing in your essay.**
 - o **Example:** My academic achievements, my work experience and my community service have all helped me to work toward my goals.
4. **Plan to devote one or two paragraphs to each of these sections and introduce each section with a clear topic sentence indicating which area you plan to discuss.**
 - o **Example:** I have always chosen challenging courses, and have a very good, good academic record.
 - o **Example:** I have developed strong leadership skills, and have learned to interact with a wide variety of people while working several different jobs.
 - o **Example:** I also have a good record of community service.
5. **You must stress how your experience helped you to develop the kinds of skills and qualities that selection committees are looking for in a good candidate. These include the following qualities taken directly from forms that are used for letters of recommendation for scholarships:**
 - o Scholarship, knowledge of chosen field, carefulness of work
 - o Motivation, enthusiasm, seriousness of purpose
 - o Creativity, originality, ingenuity in problem-solving
 - o Ability to plan and carry out research, organization
 - o Ability to express thought in speech and writing
 - o Maturity, emotional stability, ability to withstand stress and face challenges
 - o Leadership
 - o Self-reliance, initiative, independence, adaptability
 - o Responsibility, ability to make sound judgments
 - o Effectiveness with people, tact, ability to work with others, communicate effectively
6. **The challenge of the scholarship essay is to make sure that you stress a constant theme: that many of your past experiences have helped to prepare you to be a good candidate for the scholarship.**

7. **Choice of words is important.** You must be modest and yet 'brag' about your abilities at the same time. Use words like 'good candidate,' 'well-prepared,' 'good leadership skills' and other terms that remain modest while demonstrating your abilities. Avoid exaggerated terms like 'fantastic background,' 'my eternal passion for learning,' 'my exceptional skills,' 'my outstanding leadership ability'. Instead, let the evidence speak for itself.
8. **Have someone else read over your essay to make sure that you have not made any exaggerated claims,** but have clearly given enough detail to indicate your skills fully and accurately.

SAMPLE SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY (Nursing Student)

I am applying for the University of Michigan-Flint Scholarships. Presently I am a junior in the nursing program. I believe that my chosen profession will enable me to fulfill my desire to help others, to expand my knowledge base, and to travel. Throughout my life I have participated in extracurricular activities, including valuable volunteer experiences. I have striven for academic excellence, always wishing to make the most of my education. In addition, I have managed to work to provide some of my basic educational expenses. Education has always been an important aspect of my life. While in high school, I took challenging courses, such as advanced placement English and calculus, physics and chemistry. I enjoyed the arts and was involved in art, band, and choir. Despite the time-consuming practices for concerts, parades, musicals and exhibits, I was able to maintain an excellent gpa, allowing me to graduate with honors. I decided to stay near home and come to the University of Michigan-Flint because of the smaller class size, and the excellent program offered in my major.

I have received many scholarships since I began my college career. (You should list scholarships, type and date here.)

Although education plays a significant role in my life, I am involved with many other activities. During high school I was an active member of several clubs, and served as treasurer and president. I frequently tutored middle school students by offering my time before and after school. I enjoy helping others with schoolwork and have continued to aid fellow students at the college level. I also enjoy the arts and participated in many performances, often involving travel to other parts of the United States. Currently I am involved with fellow nursing students on a class and university level. I belong to the National Student Nurses Association as well. I have volunteered my time to inform individuals about what nursing involves. I have also done community work, such as blood pressure screening, and offering information for those at risk for hypertension and diabetes.

In addition to school related activities, I am involved with my local church. I teach a class of 3-6 year olds. When other teachers are unable to teach Sunday School, I come to their aid. I have participated in church cleanup, nursery day and choir. I feel that by participating in church-related activities I am setting a positive example for the children in the church to follow.

Work is also part of my life. Until recently, I worked 16-20 hours a week to provide for educational expenses. Presently I work eight hours a week in the neonatal intensive care unit at Hurley Medical Center for premature infants. I enjoy working because I am able to see newborns progress to a state where they can finally be discharged to their families. I enjoy teaching parents about their infants. Through my work experiences I have learned more about what to expect upon completion of the nursing program.

All of these experiences have helped to shape me. I have faced many challenges, balancing work and school, and I have willingly given my time. My goal is to become a registered nurse so that I can perform tasks that clients cannot do for themselves. I enjoy listening, working with others, and acting as a patient advocate and educator. I have had a large number of nursing instructors who are wonderful, and who have had an influence on my life. I would one day like to give back what they have given to me by becoming an instructor. I know that when my goals are realized, I will be able to provide something meaningful to all of the patients.