

How to Write a Scholarship Essay

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- ❖ This is your chance to let the scholarship reviewers get to know you as a person, not just how you look on paper. Talk about your accomplishments, extracurricular activities, and ways you are involved on and off campus. Discuss an adversity you have had to overcome, which shows dedication and perseverance. Tell your story.
- ❖ If there is a topic or discussion question, talk about it in a way that shows your personality and presents you positively. It is crucial that you answer the question completely.
- ❖ Make sure that you are upbeat & positive. Be careful of using the “woe is me” tactic. Scholarship reviewers have read many applications before yours, and this tactic will not make them sympathetic to your circumstances.
- ❖ Scholarship reviewers want to see that you are passionate. The more passionate and motivated you seem to be, the more likely they are to think that you are a worthy candidate of their money.
- ❖ Obey ALL essay criterion such as word count, word font, size and due date.
- ❖ Make sure that you structure your essay towards the values of the scholarship organization you are applying to. They want to see students who share similar beliefs to their mission.
- ❖ Be sure to tie your academic and career goals towards that of the scholarship organization.

GETTING STARTED:

- ❖ If at any point you feel stuck or unsure about your writing, please stop by the NAU Writing Center. They will be more than happy to assist you in your essay.
- ❖ Give yourself enough time to write. An essay written the day before it is due is obvious to pick out among the other essays written well in advance. You want to make sure

yours is the best it can be. It often helps to write an essay and then to come back and look at it again 24 hours later for a fresh perspective.

- ❖ Introductions should be inviting and want the reader to continue reading. This is not a summary of what is to come, but instead it is a chance to creatively state what you intend to cover in the essay.
- ❖ Be as specific as possible. Explain yourself fully. If you use a general statement, be sure to state what it means to you, or what is its' significance in the essay.
- ❖ Conclusions are to re-emphasize important details in the essay, not a summary of what you have discussed.
- ❖ Make your points through writing by illustration, not by statement. This means, instead of simply stating a fact about yourself or your family, show the reader this same fact through a personal narrative, or short example.
- ❖ Make sure to edit, proofread, and edit again.
- ❖ Have someone who has not helped you write the essay or seen the essay before (such as a professor, tutor, or friend) read it for clarity, accuracy and grammar.

SAMPLE ESSAYS:

Ever since I was a little boy, I have been fascinated by the world around me. There was not a person who knew more about the four acres of woods around my house than me. I would scour the woods trying to find new insects and then identify them the best I could with my National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Insects and Spiders. I began exploring before I could even read. I would find an insect, scare my mom with the awesome bug that I found and then she would read me the section about the insect that I collected. This was my favorite pastime as I was growing up and is what helped shaped me into who I am today.

In this excerpt, the author uses his childhood as a tactic to engage the reader in his essay. This tactic is commonly known as the “hook” of an essay, something that draws the attention of the reader. He uses all of the techniques needed to compose a successful essay. This student was awarded the opportunity to study abroad in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Making a difference in the life of a child is my biggest aspiration. It is a dream that began when my family first became a foster family and it has since grown working with the children that have entered our home. It is for this reason that I hope to one day become a child psychologist and help children succeed in life. I feel that as a child psychologist, one should be able to identify with children of all different ages, ethnicities and backgrounds, which brings me to the reason I wish to study abroad. Being from Arizona I know about American culture, and being Hispanic I know about my Hispanic culture; however, there are not many other opportunities to expose myself to different cultures. I believe that if I am given the opportunity to study abroad, not only will I grow personally from the experience but I will be able to identify with the children and people from different cultures, which to me is necessary in my field of study.

Here, the author sets up a good case for her interest in study abroad. This will inevitably segue into a more detailed description of her plans and needs. However, this paragraph includes every essential aspect of a good essay. It includes the “hook” - first sentence, her aspirations (being a child psychologist), and a reason to study abroad (exposure to children of different ethnicities & backgrounds). Already, she has outlined the direction of the essay, and the reader wants to keep reading.