

## Writing for Success: Scholarship Essays

The primary goal of a scholarship essay is to demonstrate that *you* are deserving of the award and that you will put the scholarship to good use. You're telling your story in order to get your readers to believe in you and your future.

### **Common Essay Topics:**

- Overcoming adversity & challenges
- Noteworthy skills, experiences, & goals
- Academic & professional goals
- Values or experiences aligning with scholarship / organization
- Shared experiences with that of the person memorialized

### **Preparing & Writing the Essay:**

- Investigate the scholarship, the providing organization, the person or entity memorialized through the scholarship, or other context information.
- List the skills, experiences, attributes, or other details that make you unique and describe how they matter in the context of this scholarship.
- Write a couple of short narratives or anecdotes about noteworthy experiences from your life that illustrate items from the list above; write descriptively and with detail.
- Write a first draft and put it away for a day. Time away from a draft offers clarity.
- Read the draft as if you're the most skeptical person you can imagine. Look for opportunities to add detail, clarify, emphasize an idea, and delete irrelevant details.
- Rearrange a few times. Move the conclusion or the "so what" point to the beginning. Try bookending an anecdote with information about your future and your goals. Play with the organization until you find the most powerful delivery of your story.

### **Tips & Reminders**

- Don't be afraid to brag about yourself, but do so with specific examples and an anecdote or two, not just lists of accomplishments or qualities (show, don't tell).
- Be real and genuine. The essay is the opportunity to share your voice and your humanity and to convey aspects of you that a resume just can't quite capture.
- Cliché = generalization = not about specifically you. Don't tell the reader "I want to help people" because anyone can say that. Instead, describe your specific reasons for wanting to help or paint a detailed picture of you in the future as such a helper.
- End the essay with a bang. It might be a beautiful sentence, a powerful idea, or a vivid description of you succeeding in your future career. Whatever it is, try to end with something that will resonate in your readers' minds even after they move on to the next submission. What do you want your reader to remember about you?