



Writing the Personal Essay

Columbia College Workshop
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WHY IT MATTERS

This is your chance to let the Scholarship Committee or Donor know your educational and career goals, why you have selected your stated major and career goal, your life experiences which have influenced this decision, and your anticipated role in society after your career goal has been achieved.

PAST → PRESENT → FUTURE

WHERE TO BEGIN

Just getting started is often the hardest part. To begin, make an outline of the things you would like to say in your essay such as:

1. Your educational and career goals
2. Why you have selected your stated major and career goal
3. Your life experiences which have influenced this decision
4. Your anticipated role in society after your career goal has been achieved
5. Why you need the scholarship or any unusual circumstances which may affect your current financial situation
6. Anything else you feel the Scholarship Committee or Donor needs to know about you in order to present yourself as the best candidate for the scholarships.

STILL STRUGGLING?

GET TO KNOW YOURSELF EVEN BETTER:

- Write a list of all your accomplishments in life, big and small. Use this list as inspiration for writing your essay.
- Interview your close friends, co-workers, supervisors, family you trust-to gain an outside perspective of your greatest attributes and talents. Let them take their time in answering or ask them to write their answers down.
- Write or update your resume to build confidence in yourself. The process of writing a proper professional resume will help you examine all you have to offer in the work-world.
- Take as many learning style and/or personality inventories as you have access to. This helps you to know more about what makes you tick, but also to determine how your perspective on life is unique from other students. Your uniqueness can earn you a scholarship award.
- List your future goals and prioritize them by short-term and long-term. Use these to show the scholarship committee how you will benefit from the funding you will receive.

INTRODUCTION

Be creative, try not to start your essay with, “My name is John Doe and I am applying for this scholarship.”

BE HONEST

WRITE FROM THE HEART

GRAB THE AUDIENCE’S ATTENTION



You can always come back to the introduction after you write the body paragraphs.

BODY

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

DON'T DWELL

GIVE DETAILS

CREATE A SCENE

CONCLUSION

1. Express gratitude to the Donor or reviewing committee for taking the time to read and review your application and for providing financial assistance to students.
2. Explain how the scholarship funds will help you if you are awarded the scholarship.
3. Mention how you will give back to society or the community.
4. Complete the circle by re-stating something from your introduction.



FINAL TIPS:

- After you have written a first draft, put it away and don't think about it for a few days. Then, re-read it. This will help you have fresh thoughts and ideas to make necessary changes.
- Re-write and revise several times. If it is too long, shorten it by taking out unnecessary words and sentences.
- Read your essay out loud to yourself to see if it flows well.
- Have other people read it for content and ask for feedback.

TIPS CONTINUED

- The most important of all: have someone read it to check for correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. Remember, there are faculty members on the Scholarship Committee. They will not score your essay well if there are misspelled words, or incorrect grammar and punctuation.
- Do not plagiarize! Remember, some members of the reviewing committee are faculty members who have access to check for plagiarism online and you may be subject to disciplinary action if your essay is not your original work.
- Be sure to save the final copy of your essay in an electronic format (on your computer desktop, or other memory device such as a memory stick, flash drive, thumb drive, etc).