

Scholarship Essay Tips

- Always answer the essay prompt, but be sure to tell it as a story. Most scholarship essay prompts ask the same questions
 - Tell us about yourself
 - What are your educational & career goals?
 - What obstacle/challenge have you overcome in your life?
 - What impact have you made to your school/community?
 - Why do you deserve/need this scholarship?
- What to write about. **Get personal...this is YOUR story in YOUR words**, but you must stand out from other applicants with similar GPAs, test scores, and activities. Often times the essay becomes the deciding factor. You may want to consider using the following 6 paragraphs to format your essay:
 1. **Introduction**.....Who are you but DON'T start with "My name is" Instead start a story with a hook.
 2. **Your life purpose**.... Explain your life purpose, life interest, &/or career goals. State the how and where you will prepare for this and how you can serve and make a difference in the lives of others through your life interest. Even if you are unsure of your career, it is important to make a decision so it can be explained in the essay. They don't want to support students who are unsure of what they want to do in the future; rather they seek students who have a life purpose.
 3. **Your family background**....maybe you are the first to go to college, or you are the youngest of 10 kids, or you were raised by a single parent or grandparents.... Was a family member an inspiration or role model?
 4. **Obstacle/challenge** you have faced and how you overcame or are overcoming it. Make sure they see you as a victor (sharing what you have learned from it) and not a victim (to feel sorry for). Describe your struggle/hardship and the character qualities learned through the difficulties. How has the challenging obstacle made you the person you are today?
 5. **Your community service & leadership experiences**... Describe the contributions you've made through community service. How has it made you a better person? What did you learn from it? What **impact** did it make on the community or person? Quality is always better than quantity. What accomplishments have you made through your leadership roles in school, sports, clubs, church, civic organizations? Was there a special project you initiated and led? How did the project **impact** you and others?
 6. **Conclusion**.....why you need this scholarship or why you deserve this scholarship. This is where you can also include any special circumstances.
- How to write your essay
 - **Follow directions.** Stay within the **required word count**, answer the prompt, and follow specific format. If it doesn't have a required length, then a good rule of thumb is one typed double-spaced page.
 - **Show them rather than tell.** Try to make your point by telling a specific story or giving an example that demonstrates your point. This makes it much more interesting.
 - **Be descriptive.** Use the five senses and provide specific details. You want them to feel, see, taste, hear.....what you are describing. Use times, dates, locations, & names.
 - Include **three-character qualities** you possess, are presently learning, and/or need to learn to be successful in life. How will these qualities make you a better person and more determined in the direction, purpose, and plan for your life?
 - **Be honest.** The worst thing you can do is mislead someone. What you share must be truthful.
 - **Proofread** for spelling, sentence structure, grammar and punctuation! Have others check it.
 - **Leave it alone for a week.** Then come back and revise, edit and re-write again if necessary.
 - The original essay and each revision should be **saved and each one given a new file name.**

You now have a basic, foundational winning scholarship essay that can be used over and over for many scholarships just like it is, or easily and quickly revised to emphasize certain topics that are required by the scholarship application.

Character Qualities

Only use the words that accurately describe you!

alert	formal	patient
ambitious	friendly	persistent
assertive	generous	persuasive
attentive	gentle	physical strength
athletic	good attendance	practical
availability	good-natured	pride in work
benevolent	grateful	productive
brave	hard working	professional
capable	helpful	punctual
cautious	honest	qualified
cheerful	honorable	reliable
competent	hospitable	resourceful
compassionate	humble	respectful
completes tasks	imaginative	reserved
confident	independent	responsible
conscientious	industrious	self-confident
contentment	informal	self-control
cooperative	have initiative	sense of humor
coordinates	intelligent	sensitive
courteous	intuitive	sincere
creative	joyful	solves problems
dependable	sense of justice	spontaneous
decisive	learns quickly	steady
determined	loyal	strong
diligent	mature	tactful
discerning	methodical	tenacious
discreet	modest	thorough
eager	motivated	thoughtful
efficient	natural	thrifty
energetic	open-minded	tolerant
enthusiastic	optimistic	trustworthy
expressive	orderly	versatile
faithful	organized	virtuous
flexible	original	willing to learn
forgiving	outgoing	wise

Examples of Obstacles

Consider the following obstacles that you have experienced in the past or present that has affected you.

Abuse	physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect to you or family member
Acceptance	of things you can't change: family, physical features, birth place, ethnicity
Accident	car, personal injury (you or family member)
Addiction	Drug, alcohol, gambling... (you, family member, or friend)
Adopted	
Birth order	Oldest – parents not sure what to do, demand too much with high expectations Middle – lost in the middle, no one pays attention to you, gets hand me downs Youngest – the baby gets away with everything and gets everything Only child – isolation, hard to share with others
Bullying	Unwanted aggressive behavior from your peers (physical, verbal, relational, cyberbullying, prejudicial)
Care giving	having to take care of family members
Criticalness	comparing yourself to others, your or others setting unrealistic goals, believing you aren't good enough or deserving
Death	of a family member, relative or friend
Disease/illness	yourself or someone close to you
Divorce/separation	living with one parent or divided between both; step-parent, step-siblings
Eating disorder	
Fear	of failure, the future, of speaking...
Feelings	of rejection, loneliness, anger, insecurity, blame, inadequacy, abandonment, frustration, lack of support, instability
Financial	too much or too little
First generation	neither parent received a Bachelor's degree & can't help you with the college process
Health issues	health condition that makes it difficult for you to function at full potential
Homeless	does not have a home and either living on the streets, in a car, shelter, or with friends/relatives
Incarceration (jail)	you, family member or friend have been in jail/prison
Large family	has many needs and no privacy
Learning disability	a condition that interferes with your ability to learn (ADHS, dyslexia...)
Learning English	English is your second language
Low expectations	disbelief of possibilities for yourself or others; thinking it is impossible
Military lifestyle	family is moving frequently for work, attending new schools making new friends
New country	adapting to new country, culture, expectations, language
Orphan	living in foster care or orphanage
Over-analyzing	Wanting things to be perfect which leads to endless cycle of cross-checking
Pressure	Self-pressure, peer pressure, family pressure to act in a particular manner
Sabotage	Family and friends challenge your dreams or discourage you reaching your goals
Selfishness	Family members or friends not sharing
Shyness	Introverted, not able to express feelings
Single parent	Living with only one parent/guardian or having a child of your own without support
Speech	Inability to speak clearly, stuttering, dislike in public speaking
Stress	obligations are too overwhelming

How do I find leadership opportunities?

<https://scholarprep.org/13-ways-show-leadership-college-applications/>

Many times, you can make your own opportunities for leadership experience. Don't limit yourself to the idea that leadership is defined by officer titles such as president, secretary or treasurer. Often, you can find situations that require someone to step up. You can also brainstorm ways to create your own leadership role. Is there an event coming up that needs someone to plan it? Is there a need at your school or in your town that no one is addressing?

BONUS TIP: *Students who are heavily involved in a particular interest or know their future career/major should strive for leadership roles that compliment that area.*

13 ways to show leadership experience:

1. **Run for an officer position (the obvious choice):** This could include student government or any other club or organization that you are a part of.
2. **Plan an event:** Events take a lot of planning, coordination and leadership. Look for opportunities to become a team leader or organizer for an event.
3. **Lead a project:** Do you have an idea for a project, but no one wants to take on the planning? Do it yourself! Creating a new project or initiative and bringing it to fruition really stands out on applications. Whether it's implementing a new recycling program at your school, organizing a food donation collection, or starting your town's first stream team, taking this kind of initiative will set you apart.
4. **Spearhead a campaign:** Interested in politics? Showcase your leadership abilities by getting involved in school, local community, state, or even national campaigns.
5. **Step up at work:** Leadership isn't just for school clubs and community service organizations. You can gain leadership experience at your job by working your way up to shift leader, supervisor or management.
6. **Become the captain of your sports team:** Playing a sport gives you the opportunity to gain leadership by becoming a team captain or leader of the team.
7. **Coordinate volunteers:** It takes strong leadership and communication skills to coordinate volunteers. Offer to manage schedules, sign-ups, assignments, and more...
8. **Start something new:** Are you really passionate about robotics, or the environment, or something else? If there isn't a club for your particular interest at your school, consider starting one! Not only will it give you leadership experience, it will also give you the opportunity to meet and engage with others who are interested in the same thing!
9. **Head up a committee:** Next time there's a call for volunteers to manage a committee, raise your hand. Make sure you track the progress and impact of your committee – what did you accomplish?
10. **Organize a fundraiser:** Take initiative in a club or organization by offering to organize a fundraiser. This is a big undertaking, but this type of project looks great on an application, especially if you can highlight the specific outcomes of the fundraiser.
11. **Become a peer mentor:** Is there a peer mentoring program at your school? Have you served as a camp counselor? Look for ways to lead through mentorship.
12. **Take the lead in community service:** Ask the organization or your volunteer supervisor how you can get more involved and gain some leadership experience. They'll be impressed and find ways for you to build your resume.
13. **Show off your entrepreneurial side:** Sell jewelry on Etsy, give private tennis lessons, start a small woodworking business in your basement, repair or tailor clothes for friends and family members, sell your famous granola and blueberry muffins, tutor for the ACT or SAT.... the possibilities are endless! What hobby, skill or interest can you turn into a business?