

Tips for Submitting a Great Scholarship Application

Not all scholarships are all about GPA. Your GPA may be some indicator of your potential BUT your success is also based on what kind of person you are, how you approach challenges, how dedicated you are and how hard your work.

Scholarship applications often include the following:

- Application Form
- Transcript
- Resume
- Recommendation/s
- Essay/s

Why is all of this necessary?

For the Scholarship Committee to get an idea of what the applicant is like and if they are a good fit for their scholarship.

What is a resume?

A one or two page “brag” sheet that summarizes your experience such as Education, Honors/Awards, Leadership Experience, Work Experience, Extracurricular Activities, Community Service, Research, Languages, etc.

Why are recommendations so important?

Recommendations are testimonials from a professor, coach, advisor, staff member, employer, etc. that demonstrate the person’s knowledge of you, your academic ability, your dedication, etc. It is important to begin to form relationships with your professors, TRIO advisors, employer, etc. *now* because they can help you by writing better recommendations for you later!

If you were applying for a scholarship/job/grad school tomorrow, who would YOU ask to write a recommendation? Can you think of at least 3 people to ask for recommendations?

Recommendations are one of the most important items in the application process that assist the Scholarship Committee in getting to know you. Another important item is the essay...

Here are some tips to get you started on your Scholarship Essay:

- **Think Positively.** If you are thinking to yourself that you don’t have the highest GPA in your class or that you are not interesting enough to get the scholarship. STOP! You will never win if you never try! Also, you don't need to have to wage a battle against cancer to write an interesting essay. Everybody's life has interest and every essay topic can be made compelling by looking at how that topic affects you personally.
- **Write Down the Essay Question.** How many parts does it have? Does the question suggest a structure or order, such as “first describe your role in...then tell why it had the following effect...and what you learned from it...”
- **Recognizing that All Essays are About You.** Why have the judges asked this question or posed this topic? How are the judges planning to get to know you through this essay?

- **Know Your Audience.** What is this scholarship about? What is the mission of the organization? Why are they providing scholarship money? Learn more from their organization website.
- **Create Goals for the Writing.** What is the essay looking for? What do you hope to convey to the Scholarship Committee?
- **Make an Outline.** The outline will assure that you have the right order and that you will cover all of the points you want to cover.
- **Work on Your Flow.** Make sure the essay paragraphs transition well! Don't forget introduction and conclusion paragraphs.
- **Write. Rewrite.** Keep asking yourself if you'd find your essay compelling if someone else had written it and you were on the Scholarship Committee.
- **Make the Introduction Inviting.** The introduction invites your reader to keep going. How? Use emotion, raise a question, or create surprise with a surprising fact.
- **Show, Don't Tell.** Go back through your essay. In every sentence where you have told the Scholarship Committee something, is there a way to show by using examples? When saying, "*I am a hard worker.*" What would demonstrate that you are a hard worker? Use daily examples. Don't simply mention your memberships in different groups; write about things you did that demonstrate leadership, service, and initiative. It's one thing to help out at a community center a few hours a week; it's a completely different thing if you took it upon yourself to recruit, organize, and lead a fundraising drive for XYZ.
- **Answer the Question!** Please...answer the essay specific question/s provided. 😊
- **End with a Compelling Conclusion.** As in the introduction, don't summarize. Instead, reemphasize the main point or circle back to the beginning and tie the loop.
- **Ask Others for Help.** Ask people to read your essay and help you with honest feedback. Ask them what they liked most and least. Ask if the essay is written in a logical fashion that is supported by examples. Ask your readers to correct typos and grammar. Do they think you answered the essay question/s?
- **Double-Check the Scholarship Rules.** Scholarship Committees are pretty strict with their application rules. Does it need to be double-spaced? 500 words or less? Saved as a .pdf and emailed? Printed and mailed?
- **Turn in Your Application Materials on Time!** It is important to send in your materials PRIOR to the application deadline. Things often get lost in the mail, lost in cyberspace, or just plain lost. Turning in the materials early allows you time to contact the Scholarship Committee or Organization to check to see if your materials have been received. If they have not been received, you will have time to send another copy of your materials.
- **Congratulate Yourself!** The essay is by far the most difficult part of the application. You have overcome the biggest obstacle to applying for a scholarship! Whether you get the scholarship in the end or not, now have more experience writing a scholarship essay and your next essay will be better and easier.

Contact Information:

Melissa Melgar

TRIO McNair Scholars Program

St. Olaf College

melgar@stolaf.edu

MN TRIO Website Link to TRIO Scholarships:

<http://mnTRIO.org/>

(Revised from http://www.scholarshiphelp.org/scholarship_essay.htm)