

## SCHOLARSHIP PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your autobiography should use single space (or 1.5 space) in an easily readable font, size 10 or 12, and it should not exceed one page when printed. The length may be hard to obtain, whether it is too short or too long, so choose your words carefully and eliminate excess words.

Your autobiography **MUST BE ERROR-FREE**. Proofread! Ask your friends/parents to proofread. Ask your English teacher. This is the most important part of the Application Packet in most circumstances. A good scholarship autobiography consists of the following sections:

### **Section 1: Personal/Family History/Autobiographical Information**

Include some of your personal history, perhaps some interesting facts about your home life and family. This is where the committee will get to know you and understand your life and circumstances.

#### Questions to think about:

- *In addition to your immediate family, do you have an extended family that has changed your outlook or perception of the “real” world?*
- *Have you received any special awards? Sports, academics, the arts?*
- *How do you spend your “free time?”*
- *Are you involved with your community? Volunteering, church, or extracurricular school activities?*
- *Travel experiences?*
- *Awards/honors received*

### **Section 2: Future Plans**

Include what your plans for life after high school include. Be as specific as you can. What kind of engineer (structural), doctor (oral surgeon), nurse (neo-natal), architect (landscape ), etc. **(Do NOT state that you picked your career so you can “make a lot of money.”)**

#### Questions to think about:

- *What are your academic goals? Where do you hope to attend school?*
- *Did a special circumstance occur that made you choose this career?*
- *What school or advanced training do you plan to attend to meet your career goal?*
- *Why? How will your personality fit into this career? What kinds of skills do you have that will help you in this career?*

**\*\*Disclaimer:** Even if you have not chosen a career, you need to have some idea of your direction to seem credible to a future scholarship provider. So, choose a direction that feels right at this time in your life.

### **Section 3: Special Circumstances**

This is where you introduce and discuss your need/desire for assistance. Why are you applying for a scholarship? Explain any financial needs. What do they need to know about you in order to know you are deserving? What sets you apart or makes you different?

#### Questions to think about:

- Are your parents close to retirement age?
- Are there a lot of college-bound children in your family?
- Are you a member of a single-parent household?
- Will you be paying for college on your own?

#### **Part 4: Acknowledgement**

Take a small amount of time to acknowledge the commitment that others are making to help you and your peers receive financial assistance. Include one or two sentences summarizing how this scholarship will help you. Include a “thank you” to the scholarship committee for considering your application.

Here are some observations.

1. The purpose of this letter is to create a sense of who you are, so the autobiography should have a strong voice (sound like you). Remember most committees will not interview you, so it is your one chance for them to get a strong impression of your personality.
2. The order does not have to be chronological, but it can be. You do not have to present this information in the perfect five-paragraph essay. This is not just another assignment; this is the ONLY thing that presents who you are to people who want to give you money. Many discussions have been made exclusively on this letter. The structure is important, but there is no one way of doing it. Play with it and see what works for you. Cover all 4 sections in the way you see most fit.
3. I have seen students leave large blank areas at the bottom which makes it look as though they had little to say. You can manipulate the margins a little, the size of the font a little, the style of the font a little, and the spacing a little to give the feel that you filled the page. The same goes for if you have way too much, but in this sense you manipulate everything to smaller dimensions allowing more info to be shared in the same one page.
4. Typically, the whole essay is usually expository (the purpose being to inform); however, I have seen these letters as narratives which can convey lots of voice and style. Again, don't think of this as a class assignment with lots of confining rules and criteria for grading. Think of this as a way to share who you are with someone (like your profile on Facebook), but for a more formal audience. You will be one of many, and if your autobiography is blah, then you won't stand out. You might even try a couple of different approaches and decide which one works best. Sometimes, you might use different letters for different audiences.
5. Last, this is a professional document. It must be neat, error-free, typed, and easy to read. This is the only way some of these people who want to give you money can get to know you. Enjoy this assignment and have fun exploring and sharing who you are, where you came from, and what has helped shape you into the person you are becoming.
6. Last, do not create dramatic scenarios or stretch your true goals in order to see more deserving/interesting/accomplished. This essay should be honest and thoughtful.