



Family Partnership Charter School Sponsors 'Steps to Your Future'

with Mari Jo Parks, M.Ed., Career & College Coach



Today's topic is the Scholarship Essays

Scholarship Essays are some of the most challenging, reflective and introspective essays a student will ever write. The importance of these essays can be the difference between thousands of dollars for college or needing to take out loans. Start writing now to be ready to use your essays for scholarships starting in January.

Essay Prompts – Here are a list of the most common prompts:

- (Most asked question) Write a one-page essay about your educational and career goals. What do you want to do with your life?
- Autobiography including family and community background and goals for the future.
- How has your personal experiences made you who you are today? Illustrate how a personal experience has influenced your development.
- What are your major accomplishments, and why do you consider them accomplishments? Do not limit yourself to accomplishments you have been formally recognized for since the most interesting essays often are based on accomplishments that may have been trite at the time but become crucial.
- Give an example of how you have worked on a team. It should include your experiences and understanding of the value of team work in the work place, home and community.
- Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? Why are they your favorites?
- What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty?
- Have you experienced a moment of epiphany, as if your eyes were opened to something you were previously blind to?
- What are your most important extracurricular or community activities? What made you join these activities? What made you continue to contribute to them?

Important Tips on Writing the Scholarship Essay:

- **Read the scholarship prompt carefully.** Think about what the people really wants to know about you.
- **Know your audience and think about the person who will be reading the essay.** When you write the essay, you want to think about the people reading it. How you write to a military person is different than how you write to a retired teacher in a sorority or a business person.
- **Think before you write.** Brainstorm, give your thoughts time to form in your mind. Plan on working on it for a few days. Write, read, rewrite and read some more.
- **Be original.** The judges may be asked to review hundreds of essays. It's your job to make your essay stand out so be creative in your answers.
- **Let your voice be heard.** The scholarship committee wants to hear from and about YOU!!! Your essay should be personal and show who you are. When trying to find your 'voice' it can be helpful to talk out loud to someone and have them take notes or use a recording setting on your phone.
- **Tell your story.** Use stories, examples and anecdotes to individualize your essay and demonstrate the point you want to make.
- **Develop a theme.** Don't simply list all your achievements. Decide on a theme you want to convey that sums up the impression you want to make. Write about experiences that develop that theme.
- **Be careful about the number of words.** Keep your essay to the limited number of words, rarely does the essay improved when it is longer than 500 to 550 words.
- **Make sure your essay is well written.** Proofread carefully, check spelling and grammar and share your essay with parents, friends or teachers. Another pair of eyes can catch errors you might miss and help you clarify your thoughts and meanings.
- **Read your essay out loud.** This is a very important trick that helps you hear what you wrote.
- **Submit an essay that is neat and readable.** Your essay should be between 300 and 500 words. Double-space the essay and provide adequate margins on all sides.
- **Be willing to adapt the essay to use with another scholarship.** Personal essays are not "one size fits all." Use your original essay and adapt it to the new application and scholarship committee you are writing for.

Advice from the website Scholarship.com

- **Be enthusiastic.** Your interest in the topic you are writing about will shine through. If your writing says, "my mom made me write this essay and my hand hurts," it will not distinguish you. If you don't know your subject, involve yourself in it by doing research.

- **Share information.** When you write, you give another person (the reader) access to your thought life. For many people this is why writing is so intimidating. If you can get past the intimidation however, and be entirely honest with your audience something magical happens—your voice/thoughts become something of interest to another human being.
- **Teach your audience.** By sharing with your audience, you create an opportunity to teach them. You've got their attention; after all, they believe you are a credible individual with interesting insight. Now they can learn. And guess what that makes you? Their teacher.
- **Review the Essay one last time.** Be sure your essay includes all criteria designated by the scholarship provider.

Final Thought

- ❖ **Be organized.** When dealing with the essay keep copies of the drafts. Label them for the scholarship you are applying to with Elks Essay 1, Elks Essay 2 and so on. There are times in your drafts that you won't use them as your Final Essay but there may be thoughts you can use in another essay.
- ❖ **Put your essays in your permanent file.** The scholarship essay is a significant piece of history. Keep the essay and look at it 5 and 10 years from now.
- ❖ **Reach out for help.** I am available through your allotment to work with students on their essays. I have helped hundreds of students develop their “voice” and be successful winning scholarships. Ask your family, friends and teachers to help you review your essay.

The Scholarship Essay seminar was recorded. You may e-mail Teresa Hintze - Hintze_Teresa@asdk12.org for access to watch this presentation.

Our next seminar is How to Write a Resume on Wednesday, Nov.11 at 6:00. Hope to see you on Zoom.

I hope this is helpful information to make your writing easier. Have a great day, *Mari Jo*