



MENDOCINO COLLEGE

Planning Your Scholarship Application Essay

Many people write by beginning anywhere with a free flow of ideas that they then mold into an appropriate order. Yes, that can work; you can occasionally start a project by writing down random thoughts. However, we recommend that you try very hard to approach your essay by writing an outline of what you want to say. The outline will assure that you have the right order and that you will cover all of the points you want to cover. Outlining does not necessarily mean that your essay goes into a required chronologic order, for instance. Some stories are best told by starting in the middle, then describing how you got there and how you are going to go forward. The outline will make it easier for you to move around the timing of various parts of the story to get the most dramatic effect.

1. **Prepare a scratch outline**—a short statement of the thesis followed by the main supporting points for the thesis. Do not underestimate the value of this initial outline – or the work involved in achieving it. Be prepared to do a good deal of plain hard thinking at this first and most important stage of your paper.
2. **Prepare a more detailed outline.** To write an effective essay, first prepare an outline, using a form like the one that follows.

FORM FOR PLANNING AN ESSAY

Introduction	Opening remarks
	Thesis statement
	Plan of development
Body	Topic sentence 1.
	Specific supporting evidence
Body	Topic sentence 2.
	Specific supporting evidence
Body	Topic sentence 3.
	Specific supporting evidence
Conclusion	Summary, closing remarks, or both



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Write A Scholarship-Worthy Essay

Brainstorm. Get out a pencil and paper and go to town thinking about your subject. This means you should write down everything that comes to mind. Even ideas that seem disconnected should be jotted somewhere so you can refer to them later if you discover a logical way to use them. When you brainstorm, brilliance shines through. Too often, by censoring ourselves, we toss out our best ideas. Put a stop to this before you get to college. Think critically; don't be critical of your thoughts.

Organize. When you are done brainstorming, organize your ideas into the most logical order. From these ideas, you should be able to see an outline for your thesis.

Research. You've established which brilliant ideas have made the cut, so support them. Textual support from noted authors or literary texts is always helpful. Use their ideas to add commentary onto your own. Just be sure to cite your sources.

Write.

- **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.

Be sure your essay includes all criteria designated by the scholarship provider.

Avoid an unconventional format. Now is not the time to test out your creative abilities. If you are serious about the scholarship you are applying for, focus your creative energy into your synthesis of ideas. By playing with the formatting too much, you detract from your writing abilities. Your essay should include:

- **Introduction.** Include your thesis within the introduction. If you are a talented theses writer it can extend into two sentences. Keep your introduction short and punchy. A long artistic introduction is tempting, but resist the urge. You have a point to get to, and likely, a word limit.
- **Body.** Make at least three discernable points within the body of your essay. Each point should be in a paragraph of its own so that it can be easily identified by the reader. Additionally, weave sources into the body of your essay if possible. It will make your writing stronger and also show that you committed yourself to researching the topic at hand.
- **Conclusion.** "In conclusion," statements are out. Lead into your conclusion clearly and gently. The body of the piece should work towards the conclusion, so your final comments should be captured your own reflections. A conclusion does not appear to be the introduction regurgitated—your reader will catch on to this.



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Writing your Scholarship Essay

The purpose of the essay is to tell the scholarship committee things that are not readily apparent from the rest of the application and to provide insight about you on a personal level. Write so that the quality of your character emerges. Here are some important tips for successful essay writing.

1. **Give yourself plenty of time.** Turn in a finished product, not a rough draft that you wrote at the last minute.
2. **Ask a friend to make suggestions.** Choose someone who really thinks a lot of you to look it over. This is especially helpful because many people find it hard to “brag” about themselves. Be sure, however, that the writing is your own voice.
3. **Market yourself.** If you have overcome hardships, show pride in your achievements and tell how they have helped you grow; don’t write to elicit sympathy, include information about your life experiences, special talents, hurdles such as a learning disability or having English as a second language, diversity that may be racial or ethnic or geographic (living in a rural area where opportunities to study or find interesting jobs may be limited), or membership in a special group such as being a woman in a typically man’s occupation.
4. **Avoid listing activities and honors.** They are probably elsewhere in the application and tell what you do, not who you are. Rather than giving a list of jobs or activities you have experienced, tell how the activity, job, or experience changed your attitude about something or perhaps solidified a belief, established a goal or sharpened a perception. Elaborate on the insights you gained from your experience.
5. **Avoid writing a one-dimensional statement that is so common as to be a stereotype.** An example: “I learned a lot from sports. I learned how to set goals, work on a team, and give 110%.” Another example: “I’ve always wanted to be a doctor because I’ve always liked to help people.”
6. **Describe what is important to you,** why it is important, and how you have demonstrated that importance in your life.
7. **Talk about your major and career goals** and tell how your interest in the field developed. Describe any related work or volunteer experience.
8. **Demonstrate creativity, intellectual curiosity, initiative, motivation, leadership, persistence, that special spark, and exceptional achievement.**

These ideas are from an article that appeared in California Notes, a publication of the University of California. The university application process includes a required essay for admittance that is also used for scholarship awarding.

Scholarship Essay Points to Consider...

The most important aspect of your scholarship essay is the subject matter. You should expect to devote about 1-2 weeks simply to brainstorming ideas. To begin brainstorming subject ideas consider the following points. From brainstorming, you may find a subject you had not considered at first.

- 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 when placed in the context of your life. This is especially true if the scholarship committee receives a list of your credentials anyway.
- Does any attribute, quality, or skill distinguish you from everyone else? How did you develop this attribute?
- 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 ever struggled mightily for something and succeeded? What made you successful?
- Have you ever struggled mightily for something and failed? How did you respond?
- Of everything in the world, what would you most like to be doing right now? Where would you most like to be? Who, of everyone living and dead, would you most like to be with? These questions should help you realize what you love most.
- Have you experienced a moment of epiphany, as if your eyes were opened to something you were previously blind to?
- What is your strongest, most unwavering personality trait? Do you maintain strong beliefs or adhere to a philosophy? How would your friends characterize you? What would they write about if they were writing your scholarship essay for you?
- What have you done outside of the classroom that demonstrates qualities sought after by universities? Of these, which means the most to you?
- What are your most important extracurricular or community activities? What made you join these activities? What made you continue to contribute to them?
- What are your dreams of the future? When you look back on your life in thirty years, what would it take for you to consider your life successful? What people, things, and accomplishments do you need? How does this particular scholarship fit into your plans for the future?

Excerpted from essayinfo.com



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Tips for Requesting Scholarship Application Letters of Recommendation

Most scholarship providers want some outside perspective about the student who is applying for their scholarship. Before you get annoyed because a letter of recommendation is another thing you have to worry about, think about the positives. You might be able to use that letter over and over again. Not only can you use it for other scholarships you are going to apply for, you might also be able to use it for college admission, internship positions, and job opportunities. Letters of recommendation are a great way to showcase your talents and abilities for scholarship providers and admissions officers. An outside perspective that acknowledges your accomplishments and strengths can go a long way toward convincing an organization that you are worthy of admission or deserving of their scholarship dollars.

1. **Ask ahead of time** for letters of recommendation. Ask a counselor, an instructor, an employer, a landlord, a high school teacher, and/or someone who knows you well (has worked with you on a committee, a team, in a club, etc.). **Do not** ask a family member. **At least one** letter of recommendation/recommendation form **must be from an instructor**.
 - Suggest that they write a general letter that you may use several times. They can make several “originals” and address it to “To Whom It May Concern.”
 - **Give them a FACT SHEET** of your skills and work background, favorite subjects in school, community activities, extracurricular activities in school, goals for the future, and accomplishments you think are noteworthy. Don’t be modest. Sometimes a friend sees us in a different light than we see ourselves.
 - Let the person know why you asked them.
 - If the person hesitates or acts uncomfortable, don’t continue to ask them. Thank them and select another person.
 - Let them know that they can either fill out the form provided in the scholarship package or write a Letter of Recommendation and attach it to the form.
2. The person writing the recommendation **can either** give it to you to attach to your application **or** they can send the form/letter directly to: Lana Eberhard, Mendocino College Scholarship Coordinator, MacMillan Hall, Room 1000, 1000 Hensley Creek Road, Ukiah, CA 95482.

Note: Once the recommendation letters are received by the Scholarship Coordinator, they cannot be copied and given to you.



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Scholarship Applicant (Fact Sheet)

Name: _____

Goals, Plans, Ambitions	Community/Volunteer Service
Student Government (office/grade)	Community Organizations (club/officer/grade)
Community Achievements (award/grade)	Employment (employer/grade)
Athletics (sport/grade)	Performing Arts (activity/grade)
Awards, Honors, Achievements (award/grade)	Student Clubs (club/officer/grade)
Additional Information:	



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Scholarships & Financial Aid Assistance

Mendocino College Scholarship Application

www.mendocino.edu

For Students>Scholarships>Application Packet

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

www.fafsa.ed.gov

The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid

www.finaid.org

Fast Web (Financial Aid Search through the Web)

www.fastweb.com

CareersAndColleges (scholarships and grants)

www.careersandcolleges.com

College Scholarships.org (scholarships and grants)

www.CollegeScholarships.org

EducationGrant.com (scholarships and grants)

www.educationgrant.com

Program Advisor (scholarships and career advice)

www.ProgramAdvisor.com

ScholarshipExperts.com (scholarships)

www.scholarshipexperts.com

MACH25: Breaking the Tuition Barriers: Scholarship Search

www.collegenet.com/mach25

Scholarships.com – Find Money for College

www.scholarships.com

Latino College Dollars

www.latinocollegedollars.org

Computers are available to students in several locations on campus:
Library, Career/Transfer Center, Learning Center, Computer Lab,
Lake & Willits Center Locations

Mendocino College
Scholarship Coordinator – Lana Eberhard

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