

The Personal Statement

An important part of both college applications and scholarships is the personal statement. Some applications provide questions for students to answer while others leave the topic open-ended.

- Most outside scholarships require an essay.
- Essays should give pertinent personal information to aid college/scholarship admissions committees in their decision making process.
- Students should use their best writing skills/style to make themselves “shine.”
- The length should be between one and three pages, a minimum of at least five complete paragraphs,
- Be clear, personal, and original.
- Write about something that is sincerely important to you.
- The essay is a chance for the college/scholarship committee to hear your “voice.”

When you write your essay...

- Save your essay(s) on your computer, flash drive or google docs. This way you can modify and re-use it. Do not type each essay into applications.
- Start early. Leave plenty of time to revise, reword, and rewrite. Have someone you trust proof read it.
- Focus on an aspect of yourself that will show your best side. • Feel comfortable in expressing anxieties. Everybody has them, and it is good to know that you can see and face them.
- Speak positively. Negatives tend to turn people off. Complaining is unwise.
- Write about your greatest assets and achievement. You should be proud of them! You can “brag” as long as you do it with grace.

Do not...

- Repeat but expand on information given elsewhere on your application.
- Write on general, impersonal topics. They want to know about **YOU**.
- Sacrifice your essay to excuse your shortcomings.
- Use cliches, slang, or contractions or go to extremes.

Common college/scholarship application essay questions:

- Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you
- Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its impact on you
- Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you and describe that influence
- Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence
- A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates how you would add to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that demonstrates the importance diversity has on you.

Suggestions for format:

Paragraph 1 – Who are you – don’t give demographics but information about what makes you tick.

When people describe me they usually say...

Paragraph 2 – Share a specific accomplishment, give details – something that you are proud of.

Paragraph 3 – What are your goals – why?

Paragraph 4 – Pay it forward... what will you do with your education?

Paragraph 5 – Why me? What will this support/admission do to assist you reach your goals.