

Common Scholarship Essay Questions and How to Handle Them

While you can't predict every essay question, knowing some of the most common ones can give you a leg up on applications. Start brainstorming now, and you may find yourself a winner!

Your Field of Specialization and Academic Plans

Samples:

- Discuss **how your interest in your field or major developed** and **describe your experience in the field** – such as volunteer work or internships – and **what you gained from this involvement**.
- How will your study of _____ contribute to your immediate or long range career plans?
- Why do you want to be a _____?
- What do you think the industry of _____ will be like in the next 10 years?

Current Events and Social Issues

Samples:

- What do you consider to be the single most important societal problem? Why?
- If you had the authority to change your school in a positive way, what specific changes would you make?
- Pick a controversial problem on college campuses and suggest a solution.
- What do you see as the greatest threat to the environment today?

Personal Achievements

Samples:

- Describe how you have demonstrated leadership ability both in and out of school.
- Discuss a special attribute or accomplishment that sets you apart.
- Describe your most meaningful achievements and how they relate to your field of study
- Why are you a good candidate to receive this award?

Background and Influences

Samples:

- Pick an experience from your own life and explain how it has influenced your development.
- Who in your life has been your biggest influence and why?
- How has your family background affected the way you see the world?
- How has your education contributed to who you are today?

Future Plans and Goals

Samples:

- Briefly describe your long- and short-term goals.
- Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
- Why do you want to get a college education?

Financial Need

Samples:

- From a financial standpoint, what impact would this scholarship have on your education?
- State any special personal or family circumstances affecting your need for financial assistance.
- How have you been financing your college education?

Random Topics

Some essay questions test your creativity and get a more well-rounded sense of your personality.

Samples:

- Choose a person or persons you admire and explain why.
- Choose a book or books that have affected you deeply and explain why.

Sources:

Hadad, R. (2009). "Common Essay Questions and How to Handle Them." FASTWEB. <http://www.fastweb.com/college-scholarships/articles/33-common-essay-questions-and-how-to-handle-them>

McBride, J. and Piro, V. "The Scholarship Essay and the Writing Process." California Community College. www.rcampus.com/users/agsriohondo/./agsscholarshipessay/11.ppt

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The Writing Process

- Step One: Analyzing the Question & Audience
- Step Two: Gathering and Brainstorming
- Step Three: Shaping by Writing an Outline
- Step Four: Writing Your Rough Draft
- Step Five: Revising the Content
- Step Six: Editing Grammatical and Mechanical Errors

Audience

- Research the organization giving the scholarship for which you are applying. Who is offering the scholarship? Who are the judges? For what is the organization known? What is the organization's mission?

Carefully Analyze the Directions

- If you are to write following a specific set of directions, then carefully read the directions several times.
 - Are there different parts to the directions?
 - Are you asked to provide different types of information about yourself?
- Divide the question into its parts and make an exhaustive list or cluster that answers each part of the question.

The Introduction

- **Introduction** : Many personal statements begin with a catchy opening, often a distinctive personal example, as a way of gaining the reader's attention. From there you can connect the example to the actual scholarship for which you are applying. Mention the specific name of the scholarship, as well as the degree you are seeking, in the first paragraph.

Adapted from Indiana University's Tutorial Services
<<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/perstate.html>>.

Body Paragraphs

- **Detailed Supporting Paragraphs:**
 - Subsequent paragraphs should address any specific questions from the application, which might deal with your own qualifications or your long-term goals or some combination.
 - Each paragraph should be focused and should have a topic sentence that informs the reader of the paragraph's emphasis.
 - The examples from your experience must be relevant and should support your argument about your qualifications.

Adapted from Indiana University's Tutorial Services <<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/perstate.html>>.

The Conclusion

- **Conclusion:** Tie together the various issues that you have raised in the essay, and reiterate your interest in receiving the scholarship. You might also mention how receiving this scholarship will be a step towards a long-term goal in a closing paragraph.

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- McBride, J. and Piro, V. "The Scholarship Essay and the Writing Process." California Community College. www.rcampus.com/users/agsriohondo/./agscholarshipessay/11.ppt