Personal Essay Tips & Guidelines

Many scholarship applications require a personal essay or statement of purpose. Ideally your essay needs to be no longer than 500 words. The essay is usually the most important part of a scholarship application. Although good test scores, a high GPA, and a solid list of activities are vital, judges frequently give the most weight to the essay because it is your chance to let them know why you deserve money more than all the other qualified applicants. It is the window into who you are, your passions, and your potential for being a good match. It is a way of getting to know you without actually meeting you. The essay is how you stand out — or how you fall flat. Also, be sure to include your panther ID number on your personal statement when applying for Georgia State University scholarships.

Writing Your Essay

- Spend a few hours brainstorming about what you would like to include in your essay.
- Try to make your essay as unique and memorable as possible. Think about yourself in relation to the rest of the world and to understand how you relate, and particularly, what's special about you.
- Make sure that you will be able to answer all questions provided by the scholarship application and follow directions.
- If you are submitting an essay previously written for another scholarship, make sure to tailor it to the specific scholarship for which you are applying.

Please Do...

- Include your plans for the future. Judges want to award students who want to do something valuable especially if the student’s direction and drive is backed up by grades and activities.
- Intrigue judges by starting with a story. A successful essay will elaborate on an activity or experience.
- Reflect on your gifts and talents.
- Create accounts so deeply true and engaging that judges will feel they have a stake in your success.

Please Don't...

- Write a sob story. Judges don’t want to hear about how much you need financial support but rather how you have earned everything you have and let them know how important it is to you to get your education.
- Submit a last minute draft. Even the best writers make the simplest mistakes.
- Use clichés. They say to the judges that you did not put much thought into your essay.
- Write your own question. If the topic required does not apply to you, search for other scholarships that do.

Example Questions Answered by Personal Essay

- What was the most difficult time in your life and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty? How will this knowledge help you succeed in college?
- Discuss a significant activity, experience, or achievement that has changed your life and explain how and why.
- Describe your personal and family background and how you turned your challenges into opportunities.
- What do you want to accomplish after college? Explain why you have set these goals and how you will accomplish them.