Scholarship Essay Tips

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Adapted from: "Steps For Writing College Scholarship Essays." *AUSB Writing Center*, Antioch University, 2017.

Structure of a General Expository Essay

Introduction

- Opening Sentence
- Context (background information)
- Thesis Statement

Body Paragraphs

- Topic sentences
  - Supporting evidence
  - Analysis
  - Transition
- Topic Sentence, etc

Conclusion

- Overview of main ideas
- Restate thesis
- Leave the reader with something to ponder or action to take

Steps to a Great Essay

- Read the essay prompt carefully
- Consider the scholarship committees expectations
- Brainstorm key points to include
- Write an outline or rough draft
- Be specific and avoid generalizations
- Write a strong statement that summarizes your points
- Rewrite, revise, rewrite
- Narrate a significant moment
- Express your passion

Prompt and Expectations

- Carefully read the essay prompt.
- Read “between the lines”
- Think about what the scholarship committee expects you to write
- Research the organization’s philosophy and goals, try to align your essay
- If any directions are unclear, contact the organization and ask for clarification

- Return to the research and remember selection committees often want to fund students that best fit their organizational goals.
- Consider these questions while brainstorming:
  - Why your experience and the mission of the funding organization are a good fit
  - Academic awards & other honors
  - Internships or other academic experiences that might not be on your transcript
  - How your major/concentration aligns with your future career goals
  - Challenges you've overcome
  - Your financial circumstances that make it necessary for you to finance your studies through scholarship money

Brainstorm

Write an Outline and/or a Rough Draft

- Telling a story can be an effective way to write a scholarship essay. Start with big ideas, then fill in the details.
- Start with big ideas / key words and fill in details and support. Use the eleven minute structure we've practiced.
- Be specific and avoid general statements.
  - For example, if you are writing about how your father is your role model, try to avoid clichés and generalizations. Consider mentioning something that might be surprising to your reader and connecting that to your main idea.
  - Tanabe and Tanabe (2014) give the following advice: "Place your thumb over your name at the top of the essay, and ask yourself if any of your classmates could have written this essay. If the answer is 'yes' then it fails the thumb test and is probably not original."

Write a Strong Statement that Summarizes Your Points

- Yes, this is a thesis statement.
- Write it first or during the planning, brainstorming step
- The thesis doesn't have to begin or end your essay, but it should appear somewhere in order to tie all the individual sections together.
- Take this thesis for example: "Various experiences from both my academic career and my personal life align very well with your organization's mission: shaping community leaders who are working toward s amore just and sustainable world."
- When you finish your essay, reflect back on this statement and ask yourself – "Does this essay further explain and support my thesis statement?

Rewrite, revise, rewrite

- Write a first draft. Rest. Revisit and revise.
- Sometimes writing a whole new draft is a good next step. Then, blending the two drafts by taking the best in each.
- Ask a friend to give you some feedback.
- Make sure the essay sounds like you.
- Avoid pontificating and use words you normally use.

- Make sure the essay sounds like you.
- Strike a balance between modesty and arrogance. You should be proud, but not arrogant.
- Return to the prompt and scholarship information to make sure your essay is meeting the requirements.
- Add support by describing accomplishment in detail and telling the reader how you felt about these experiences.
- Add suspense to make sure the committee members will read the whole essay.

Narrate a Significant Moment / tell a story

One of the most effective techniques for writing a scholarship essay is to include a narration of an important moment in your life. In other words, don't try to explain everything about your personal history. Instead focus on just one specific moment, event, or realization. Here are some example questions you could answer:

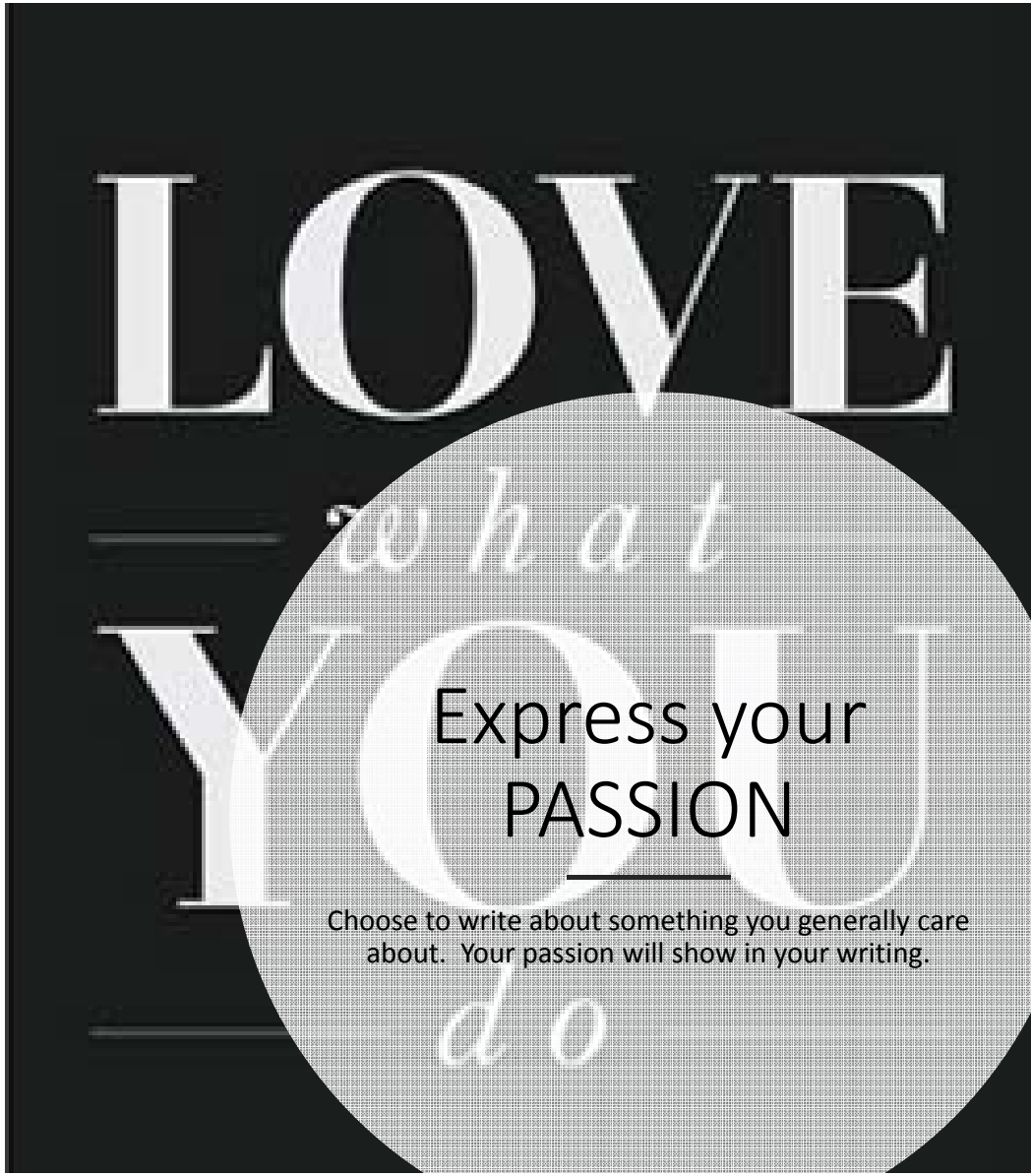
Questions about your goals:

- Was there a specific event/moment that helped you choose your major or career path?
- Is there a specific idea/reading/concept you studied that changed your way of thinking?
- How does your major/career goal suit your personality? Is there a moment you could reference to highlight this?

ALL HANDS
VOLUNTEERS

Questions about relevant volunteer/work or personal experience:

- What is the most important thing you learned from your work/volunteerism?
- Was there a specific moment in the past when you had a personal realization the shaped your life?
- What motivated you to volunteer? How do you personally benefit from volunteering?
- Is there a person that you've met that has inspired you? How?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of? Why?



Express your PASSION

Choose to write about something you generally care about. Your passion will show in your writing.