

Tips from the People Who Will Be Reading Your Essays

Wondering what goes on inside the heads of scholarship reviewers as they read your essay? So were we. To minimize your worries and maximize your scholarship potential, we went straight to the sources. We contacted men and women who took part in the essay review process and found the qualities of a winning essay. We asked what applicants could do to stand out and what kind of essays made readers cringe. Here is what they had to say:

- **Directly Answer The Question**

Too many times, writers make interesting points, but they are not about the questions at hand. If you are asked to answer a specific question, stick to it. Listing off your merits when asked about environmental problems can be tempting, but it can hurt your chances at a scholarship. If you find a way to twist your swamp cleaning experience into the essay, you're very slick. When it is not that easy to do, just stick with the direct answer.

- **Address Your Mistakes**

As nice as it would be, we can't change our GPA's before sending out scholarship essays. But don't despair because of academic problems. If you have done poorly in a class, address the reasons. Explain what went wrong and what you are doing to improve. A few mistakes don't have to spell disaster. Learning from your errors shows character, and it breathes life into your essay.

- **Show That You Are Well Rounded**

There are many good students sending in scholarship essays. If you want to stand out, you need to convince the readers that you are more than just your grades. List organizations in which you took part and hobbies to which you dedicated time. Remember to explain why these hobbies and organizations make you unique. Being part of the Frisbee club might not score you many points. For all the judges know, you could have attended one game and watched the clouds go by. Explain how you contributed, recognition you have received, and, if possible, leadership positions you have held.

- **Add A Personal Touch**

Credentials are great and all, but a dash of personality can take your essay above and beyond. Adding a bit of humor or sharing an interesting but relevant experience will make your essay stand out. None of us want to ruin our chances by appearing nonchalant, but adding a little personality will help you in the final round.

- **Last But Definitely Not Least, Proofread**

We all know the importance of putting our papers through a spell and grammar check. Still, grammatically incorrect essays continue to be turned in. Until that stops, this point deserves to be repeated. Otherwise excellent applications can be taken out of the running because of spelling mishaps. Even when you have put a lot of time into your essay, it may appear sloppy if it is grammatically incorrect. You have a lot to offer. Make sure your essay stands out for its excellence and not its errors.