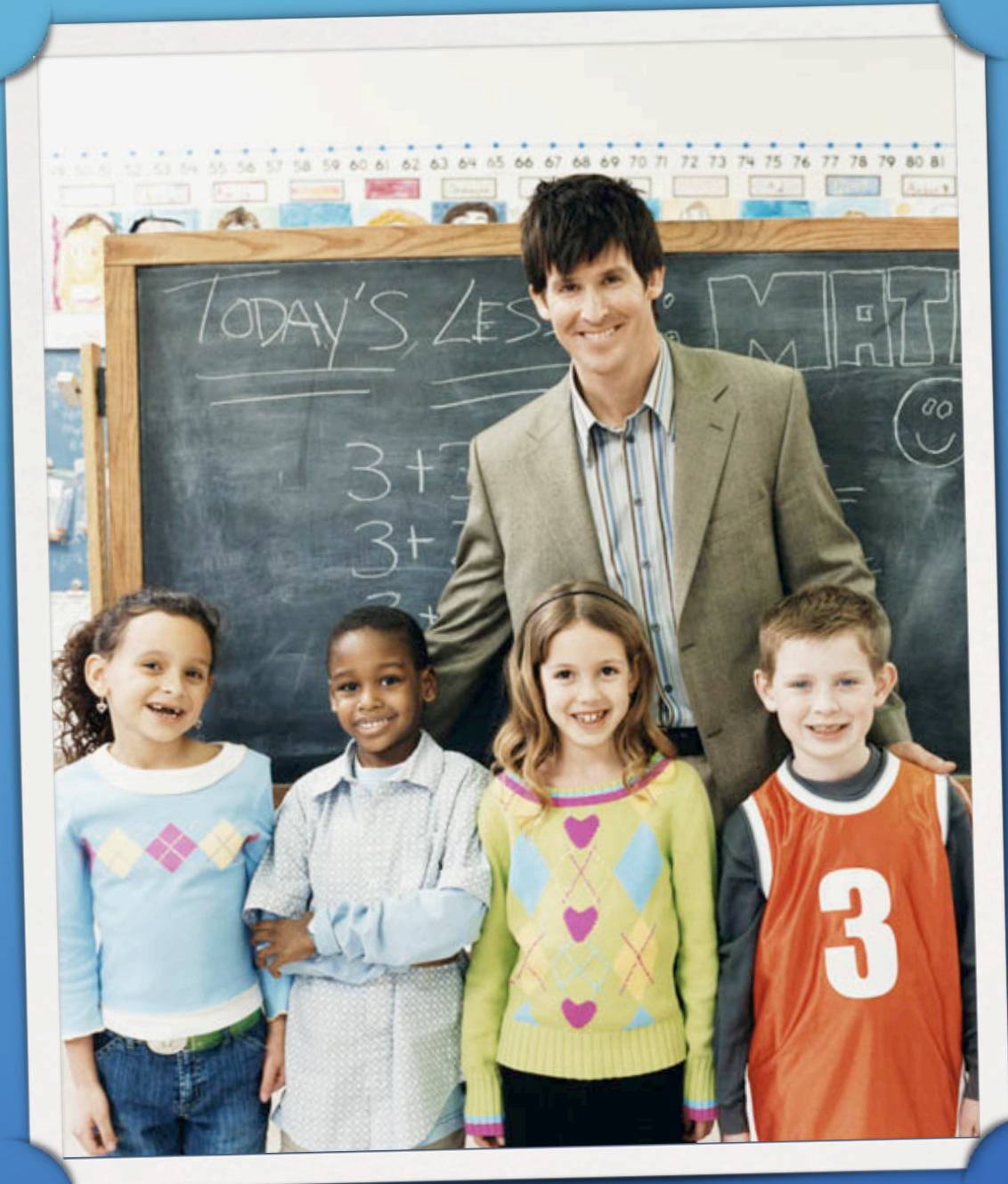


# CHICKEN SOUP

for scholarship applicants



A Bunch of Tips and Tricks  
To Win A Scholarship Programme

edited by : Sunu Wibirama, Indonesia

## About This Paper

*Chicken Soup for Scholarship Applicants* is a paper containing a lot of information about how to be a winner in scholarship programme. There are a lot of articles in internet about winning a scholarship programme. Most of them are found at scholarship-theme websites or blogs. This paper is created in order to collect separated articles and bring them to an easy-to-read portable paper which can be used as a basic manual for students who interested to apply a scholarship programme. Finally, I hope it will be usefull for all of you.

Don't ever hesitate to contact me at [sunu@mail.te.ugm.ac.id](mailto:sunu@mail.te.ugm.ac.id) if you find other interesting articles related to scholarship winner's tips and tricks !

Best Regard,

**Sunu Wibirama**

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*To students who strongly expect to upgrade their knowledge and ability*

## ***Finding Scholarships on the Internet***

*Expert Advice provided by Scholarship Experts.*

Okay, so you are ready to tackle that daunting task of finding scholarships to pay for college. And you want to use the Internet to expedite the search process. But there are so many scholarship search services out there - which ones should you use? How do you know what qualities and features to look for in a scholarship search service? Should you use a fee-based service or a free one? And how do you avoid getting scammed while looking for awards? Use the following guide to determine what to look for and to assist you in finding the service that will best fit your scholarship search needs.

### **Profile Matches Are Key**

First and foremost, find a scholarship search service that has sophisticated matching technology. A good scholarship search service will match the personal information you provide to them with scholarships that you are eligible to apply for. This will minimize the time you spend browsing through lists of awards, and will give you more time to actually work on the application process itself. Beware of simple keyword search services or services that only ask a few questions about your background. Many such services will return hundreds of scholarships for you to wade through, wasting valuable time that you simply don't have. Look for services with easy-to-use, thorough profile pages that generate results closely matched to your profile.

### **Up-to-Date Scholarship Information**

Secondly, find a scholarship search service that provides accurate and up-to-date scholarship information. Reading requirements for scholarship programs from two years ago will not help you at all; in fact, using outdated information will simply slow your progress in actually securing scholarship funding for college. Remember, you need to find a service that offers scholarship information for the current academic year. Don't waste your time on websites with out-dated contact lists, broken application links, and discontinued programs.

### **The Privacy Policy**

Do not become part of a spamming list! When you fill out a profile with a scholarship search service, the service collects and stores your very personal information; such collecting of profile information is necessary for accurate scholarship matching. Make sure you read the privacy policy for any service you use so you know what happens to that personal information once you enter it into the website. Some websites actually make money by selling your information to third parties that want to advertise to you. Be very careful about giving out your personal information to companies without credible, clearly stated privacy policies - the last thing you need is an email inbox full of spam and a mailbox full of unwanted solicitations.

### **An Easy Process**

Make sure the service is set up to save you time. If you take the time to fill out the profile, make sure the information is saved so you don't have to start from scratch each time you want to look for more scholarships. Also, make sure there is a way to edit and update your profile, in case you change your major or improve your test scores or change your mind about the college or university you want to attend. Search services with such customer-oriented features will save you time and frustration in the search process, and that's what you should be aiming for - saving time, avoiding scams, and finding money to pay for college!

## ***How to Find Money for College Education***

*By Michael Carter*

Many current and future college students need help to pay for college. Especially with tuition rates going up every year, students are looking for ways to pay for their college education. Student loans may be a necessity, but there are other sources of funding that will help pay for school. There are many opportunities to be awarded funds that do not have to be repaid, as student loans do. Many students will qualify for government grants for college. Grants are awards based upon financial need that are given to students by the government.

How do students get money in the form of grants? Students apply for government grants for college by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is the first step in the financial aid process. By completing this application form, students will be matched with aid programs that they qualify for.

The FAFSA is the one application form that is used by all public colleges in the US to determine eligibility for both loans and grants. Grants are always free money — that is it doesn't have to be paid back. Grants may come in the form of federal grants or state grants. Students will learn which grants they have been awarded when they get the results from the FAFSA back in the mail.

Students can also get free money for college by applying for college scholarships. There are many college scholarships available all across the United States. There are resources available to help students find scholarships such as online databases and published directories. Many of these books can even be found in the local library.

There are other ways that students can get money to pay for college education expenses. Students should check with their college's financial aid, student employment and scholarship offices to find more opportunities to get money for school.

# **Scholarship Search Engine**

*by: Vanessa McHooley*

Getting scholarships for college is not the hard part - but actually going out and finding scholarships that fit your requirements! For years, high school guidance counselors used to suggest possible scholarships to students or give them large booklets filled with hundreds and thousands of college scholarships. Going through these books and actually finding a scholarship became a task all in and of itself. With the popularity of the internet though, finding a scholarship for college through a search engine has never been easier and has even been made simpler through the usage of specific search engines tailored just for college scholarships!

## **Starting Your Scholarship Search**

The first thing to do before using a search engine to find college scholarships is to make a list of all of the skills or qualities about yourself that might appeal to someone handing out a college scholarship. Are you athletic in some sport that some colleges offer? Do you write poetry that would make Walt Whitman smile? Can you name all of the states in America in alphabetical order in under 2 minutes? Chances are, if you have some talent or skill, someone will be offering a scholarship that could put you into college.

## **Finding Your Scholarship Matches**

Next, go into any search engine and start searching for websites that offer scholarships. You may be able to find entire sites devoted to finding and searching for scholarships that are tailored around your needs. Try and be fairly specific, as the term "scholarship" is likely to bring up thousands of sites that do not apply to you. If you want a scholarship for those interested in writing, type in something like "creative writing college scholarships." This should at least bring up some more options for you.

## **Apply For The Scholarships Now!**

Finally, start applying for scholarships that you find through a search engine. Sign up for more information from sites that host advertisements for various scholarships. These sites will then e-mail you the latest scholarship opportunities in your field of interest. These scholarships may be out there somewhere for you. Just make sure to turn to your favorite search engine to find out exactly where they are located.

This article is distributed by NextStudent. At NextStudent, we believe that getting an education is the best investment you can make, and we're dedicated to helping you pursue your education dreams by making college funding as easy as possible. We invite you to learn more about Scholarship Search Engine at <http://www.NextStudent.com>.

## **Winning The Scholarship Award**

*Content Partner: ScholarshipExperts.com*

Searching for and finding scholarships is only the first half of the process. You still need to apply for each scholarship you are trying to win. Applying for scholarships can be time consuming and takes dedication and motivation. But the thousands of dollars you could receive makes the effort worthwhile. Below are some hints to help you apply for and win scholarships.

### **Be proactive**

No one is going to track you down to give you a scholarship; you need to do the legwork yourself. So when you find awards with eligibility criteria that you can meet, contact the provider and request a scholarship application packet. Whether you have to request the application via email, phone or by sending in a self-addressed stamped envelope, do it. There's just no other way to get the ball rolling than to be proactive and assertive in requesting information for yourself.

### **Be timely**

Almost all scholarship providers set deadlines, and you **MUST** adhere to them. Make sure you have all materials submitted before the deadline. If the scholarship deadline is approaching and you have not yet even received the application packet that you requested four weeks earlier, follow-up with the provider and request the application packet again. You do not want to miss a deadline, as most scholarship providers do not consider late applicants.

### **Be organized**

Good organizational skills can really pay off - literally! Keep your applications ordered by deadline date and give yourself plenty of time to complete them and send them in well before the due date. Keep letters of recommendation and transcripts on hand so you don't have to obtain new ones every time they are required for an application. Make copies of your completed applications before sending them in, and file them in folders labeled with the deadline date and the mailing address and phone number of the scholarship provider. Call before the deadline to see if your scholarship application was received. If it got lost in the mail, (the postal service is not perfect!) you still have an extra copy you can send in.

### **Be persistent**

The scholarship search process doesn't just happen overnight. You must be diligent about looking for new scholarships to apply for. Plan to spend several hours each month reviewing the scholarship programs with deadlines approaching, preparing application packets, and getting the applications in the mail on time. And then the cycle should begin again - finding scholarships, sending away for application information, and applying in an organized, timely manner.

### **Be positive**

Finally, believe in yourself and in your chances of winning a scholarship. Hard work and time spent on the scholarship process will pay off eventually. Keep your chin up and think about how great the reward will be if you can land even one of the scholarships you're trying for! After all, your education depends on it!

# **Things to Prepare Before Applying a Scholarship**

*Author: Damry, University of Tadulako, Indonesia*

Getting a scholarship for an overseas study is a competitive process. This is because many people like you want the scholarship, but not all can be awarded. The scholarship money is simply not enough to fund all at once. Also, the scholarship providers want to ensure that only the best, well prepared applicants are selected and so the money is spent rightly and efficiently to what it is intended for. So, you have to be a winner!

Lots of people have won scholarship. You hear this every time. But how have they done this good job? Are they luckier or more superior or intelligent than others? No, they are not! If you ask them about the winning secrets are, they may simply give you the following lists: things to prepare or consider before applying a scholarship.

## **1. Academic certificate and transcript**

Soon after graduation, do not wait. Obtain your original academic certificate and transcript, and make some copies of them. You need to certify them and, remember, that people at university are some times going somewhere when you need their signatures. More importantly, you need to translate both your academic certificate and transcript. Check around, there maybe some people have done the same. This will ease the task. If not, they are yours anyway. When you are done, it is wise to get other people to see them. They may give you valuable inputs, even correcting misspelled course names. Again, you need signatures of dean and rector on the translated version of your academic certificate and record.

## **2. Research proposal**

You need to decide earlier which study route you are going to undertake - course or research or both. If you prefer a course-based study, you do not need a proposal. But if you are going to do a research, you definitely need a research proposal.

Good research proposal require time and energy to construct. So it is always better to prepare it earlier. Basically, the proposal will not be much different to the one you have done previously in your research as part of your undergraduate study. This will include background, objective, problems or questions to answer, hypothesis, methodology, and references. These are the essences of a proposal.

When you are done with those basic requirements, ask suggestions from others. When the application is open, check if the scholarship provider requires a bit more to what you have prepared.

## **3. Letter from intended university and supervisors**

Download application form from the university website and fill it before send it back to the university. The university will respond you and issue you with a letter of acceptance. You may indicate in the form that you will begin your study next year, waiting for a scholarship which you are now struggling for. Most likely they will issue you with a conditional acceptance. They will keep reissuing this until you succeed with your scholarship application.

While your are in the website, go to your targeted department or school to find your potential supervisor. Even, this needs to be done first before filling in a admission form. The reason you will not studying in this university unless you have got an academic staff willing to supervise you. So get their email address, and make contacts with them. In the first time, you just need to introduce yourself, mention your academic background and your research proposal, and ask if he/she is available to supervise you. If they are busy because there are many students already under their responsibilities, don't panic. Ask him/her if they know people around there who are still able to take additional students.

The good with the letter from university and supervisor when you have them at hand is that you can attach them to your application form and present them to the interviewers. These letters will increase your chances of winning the scholarship because the interviewers will so impressed that you are better prepared and have taken more advanced steps compared to other candidates.

## **4. Family**

For those who are married, this must not be overlooked. Not all scholarship providers allow you to bring family members (spouse and children) with you. The majority is yes, but you need to ensure whether additional funds for family members are available or not. If not, this means you have to be prepared to fund them yourself. Even if they do provide additional funds for family members, there are always cost to be funded using your own money. This is because the scholarship, usually, will only fund basic needs such living expenses, health insurance, health clearance before departure and visa. Other than these such as cost of

transportation - international or domestic - are usually not covered and so funds for these have to be prepared.

More need to think if your spouse is working, especially if it is in a government institution or department. Will she be allowed to go with you or not? If, how are you going to overcome this. A discussion with spouse is needed here.

### **5. Work**

If you are currently working, you need to check if your employer support you for a further study or not. If yes, it will allow you to go and may provide you with financial supports as well. Generally, government bodies support for human resource development of their employees and so this is not usually a problem for public servants. This is not the case for private enterprises, so many candidates working in these commercial bodies have had to make a tough decision.

### **6. Health**

Health status is another consideration for successfully obtaining a scholarship. Some people are fail or at least postponed to start their study because of health problems. So, if you intend to apply for a scholarship, keep practicing those healthy habits. Most scholarship providers will provide a health insurance to their awardees, but you need to make sure about what all this insurance covers. Does it cover dental and eyes-related health problems? If it not, then it is cheaper for example going to a dental practitioner or buying glasses here than there.

### **7. Driving license**

It is advantageous to have a car there, not only to support your daily academic activities but also for your leisures. This is especially true if you are going there with your family members. But to do this, you need to have a valid license. Check with the scholarship or with experienced people whether a foreign license can be used in the intended country or not. This include different policies from one state to another. If students are allowed to use a foreign license, get one here or revalidate your old one. Obtaining a driving license there is expensive and time demanding.

So, these are things that you may prepare or consider before applying a scholarship. Remember that a good preparation equals to halfway through the whole process. Be prepared and win the scholarship!

## **How to write a recommendation letter**

Source: [http://www.eastchance.com/howto/rec\\_let.asp](http://www.eastchance.com/howto/rec_let.asp)

Recommendation letters are letters written by professors who know you, assessing your capacity to meet the requirements of a program you are applying for. They're supposed to help decision-makers to get a better picture of your potential. The sure thing is, if you apply for a Master program, or for a PhD, sometimes even for a summer school, you cannot avoid them. Another part of the harsh reality is that due to different reasons, if you are a student in Eastern Europe you will often find yourself in the position to write these letters yourself. The professor will, in this case, only proof-read and sign the text. In case you belong to the lucky ones who don't have to write recommendation letters themselves, you should still read this section. You will find useful hints about how to handle properly this delicate part of the application process.

### **How to deal With Them**

Usually, recommendation letters have to be written on especially designed sheets of paper that come as part of your application form. In some cases, letters on letterhead will be accepted, if for some reasons, you can use those special pieces of paper. Read carefully what has been written in the application booklet about such situations. Fill in the fields at the beginning of the form that ask for your name, department, etc. Take the forms to a professor who knows you and is familiar with your skills or activity. Allow the professor as much time as possible (ideally 2-3 weeks) to write your letter. Try to make sure the professor is aware of who you are, what your interests are and understands what you are applying for. A small talk when you are handing the recommendation forms or a printed summary of all that accompanies the forms can help to this respect. Try, with politeness and attention, to make sure the professor will write you a recommendation in warm terms. Recommendations tend to be, even though not always, somewhat bombastic in vocabulary. If you ever get your eyes on such a text, you might upgrade the opinion you had about yourself. Be prepared with envelope and stamps, in case the professor wants to send the letter him- or herself. You should also read the related lines from the application booklet about this point. Some universities prefer to receive the recommendation letters together with the rest of the application, while some would rather get them separately, sent directly by the professor who recommends you. It is usual practice that envelopes are signed by the professor over the lid, in such a way that one cannot open the envelope without deteriorating the lid. In order to increase the confidence the recruiters put in the letter when you have to send the recommendation together with the rest of the application, we advise you to request such a signature and/or an official seal.

### **Content**

Sometimes, a busy professor will suggest more or less directly that you produce a first draft of the text that he or she will correct and sign. In other cases, this is the only way you can get a letter that differs from the standard text every student gets from that professor. Our goal is not to discuss the reality of Eastern European campuses here. Still, if you think you might be offended by the practice of writing your own recommendation letters, it is probably better that you do not read the rest of the text.

A recommendation letter ideally starts by stating the name of the professor who writes the letter and his/her title, together with the name of the student for whom the letter is written. The professor should also state since when he/she has known the student: year, class or other activity. It should in any case be clear that the professor had the opportunity to get to know the student well and assess his/her capabilities.

The assessment of the student capabilities should be made from a multiple point of view over the next 3-4 paragraphs. From a professional point of view, it should give account of the student knowledge, interests and capabilities, activities and results, work capacity, etc. Personally, it should assess the student personal characteristics, character, social skills, his or her relations with the students and professors. Same as in other application documents, the direction should be from facts/experience to qualifications, and from those, to value judgments. Especially those skills relevant for the desired program should be outlined throughout the paper.

The final paragraph should provide an overall assessment of the student potential to fulfill the requirements of the program, even though partial judgments can and should be provided in the body of the letter.

Some of the graduate study programs supply you with forms for the recommendation letters that ask the professor to ask a number of specific questions about your skills and qualifications. Sometimes, space for the answer is allowed after each question, and there is where the answers should be written, rather than on a separate sheet of paper. Other times, the questions come as a block, and in this case you have the option to

answer the question still in the form of a letter. Should you choose this option, make sure the letter answers clearly every single question, preferably in the order in which they are asked on the form.

Don't forget to write the date and the name of the home university. The name of the program you are applying for should come out explicitly in the body of the text, in order to make clear that the letter has been written for that occasion. Unless the format of the paper on which the letter should be written makes this difficult, you can print the text. Even better, have the text on a disk with you, in case the professor will consider any changes necessary. Be ready to give the professor time to read your draft and make those changes.

Most recommendation forms contain a certain number of fields, the multiple-choice kind, where the professor has to assess, by checking cells, your abilities. Make sure those fields are checked and insert the text in the place left for additional remarks. We strongly suggest that you do not leave blank that portion of the form, but use it instead as a self-standing recommendation letter.

Good luck.

# **How to Write a Research Proposal**

*By: Paul T. P. Wong, Ph.D., C.Psych.*

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Most students and beginning researchers do not fully understand what a research proposal means, nor do they understand its importance. To put it bluntly, one's research is only as good as one's proposal. An ill-conceived proposal dooms the project even if it somehow gets through the Thesis Supervisory Committee. A high quality proposal, on the other hand, not only promises success for the project, but also impresses your Thesis Committee about your potential as a researcher.

A research proposal is intended to convince others that you have a worthwhile research project and that you have the competence and the work-plan to complete it. Generally, a research proposal should contain all the key elements involved in the research process and include sufficient information for the readers to evaluate the proposed study.

Regardless of your research area and the methodology you choose, all research proposals must address the following questions: What you plan to accomplish, why you want to do it and how you are going to do it. The proposal should have sufficient information to convince your readers that you have an important research idea, that you have a good grasp of the relevant literature and the major issues, and that your methodology is sound.

The quality of your research proposal depends not only on the quality of your proposed project, but also on the quality of your proposal writing. A good research project may run the risk of rejection simply because the proposal is poorly written. Therefore, it pays if your writing is coherent, clear and compelling.

This paper focuses on proposal writing rather than on the development of research ideas.

## **Title**

It should be concise and descriptive. For example, the phrase, "An investigation of . . ." could be omitted. Often titles are stated in terms of a functional relationship, because such titles clearly indicate the independent and dependent variables. However, if possible, think of an informative but catchy title. An effective title not only pricks the reader's interest, but also predisposes him/her favourably towards the proposal.

## **Abstract**

It is a brief summary of approximately 300 words. It should include the research question, the rationale for the study, the hypothesis (if any), the method and the main findings. Descriptions of the method may include the design, procedures, the sample and any instruments that will be used.

## **Introduction**

The main purpose of the introduction is to provide the necessary background or context for your research problem. How to frame the research problem is perhaps the biggest problem in proposal writing.

If the research problem is framed in the context of a general, rambling literature review, then the research question may appear trivial and uninteresting. However, if the same question is placed in the context of a very focused and current research area, its significance will become evident.

Unfortunately, there are no hard and fast rules on how to frame your research question just as there is no prescription on how to write an interesting and informative opening paragraph. A lot depends on your creativity, your ability to think clearly and the depth of your understanding of problem areas.

However, try to place your research question in the context of either a current "hot" area, or an older area that remains viable. Secondly, you need to provide a brief but appropriate historical backdrop. Thirdly, provide the contemporary context in which your proposed research question occupies the central stage. Finally, identify "key players" and refer to the most relevant and representative publications. In short, try to paint your research question in broad brushes and at the same time bring out its significance.

The introduction typically begins with a general statement of the problem area, with a focus on a specific research problem, to be followed by the rationale or justification for the proposed study. The introduction generally covers the following elements:

1. State the research problem, which is often referred to as the purpose of the study.
2. Provide the context and set the stage for your research question in such a way as to show its necessity and importance.
3. Present the rationale of your proposed study and clearly indicate why it is worth doing.
4. Briefly describe the major issues and sub-problems to be addressed by your research.
5. Identify the key independent and dependent variables of your experiment. Alternatively, specify the phenomenon you want to study.
6. State your hypothesis or theory, if any. For exploratory or phenomenological research, you may not have any hypotheses. (Please do not confuse the hypothesis with the statistical null hypothesis.)
7. Set the delimitation or boundaries of your proposed research in order to provide a clear focus.
8. Provide definitions of key concepts. (This is optional.)

### **Literature Review**

Sometimes the literature review is incorporated into the introduction section. However, most professors prefer a separate section, which allows a more thorough review of the literature.

The literature review serves several important functions:

- Ensures that you are not "reinventing the wheel".
- Gives credits to those who have laid the groundwork for your research.
- Demonstrates your knowledge of the research problem.
- Demonstrates your understanding of the theoretical and research issues related to your research question.
- Shows your ability to critically evaluate relevant literature information.
- Indicates your ability to integrate and synthesize the existing literature.
- Provides new theoretical insights or develops a new model as the conceptual framework for your research.
- Convinces your reader that your proposed research will make a significant and substantial contribution to the literature (i.e., resolving an important theoretical issue or filling a major gap in the literature).

Most students' literature reviews suffer from the following problems:

- \* Lacking organization and structure
- \* Lacking focus, unity and coherence
- \* Being repetitive and verbose
- \* Failing to cite influential papers
- \* Failing to keep up with recent developments
- \* Failing to critically evaluate cited papers
- \* Citing irrelevant or trivial references
- \* Depending too much on secondary sources

Your scholarship and research competence will be questioned if any of the above applies to your proposal.

There are different ways to organize your literature review. Make use of subheadings to bring order and coherence to your review. For example, having established the importance of your research area and its current state of development, you may devote several subsections on related issues as: theoretical models, measuring instruments, cross-cultural and gender differences, etc.

It is also helpful to keep in mind that you are telling a story to an audience. Try to tell it in a stimulating and engaging manner. Do not bore them, because it may lead to rejection of your worthy proposal. (Remember: Professors and scientists are human beings too.)

### **Methods**

The Method section is very important because it tells your Research Committee how you plan to tackle your research problem. It will provide your work plan and describe the activities necessary for the completion of your project.

The guiding principle for writing the Method section is that it should contain sufficient information for the reader to determine whether methodology is sound. Some even argue that a good proposal should contain sufficient details for another qualified researcher to implement the study.

You need to demonstrate your knowledge of alternative methods and make the case that your approach is the most appropriate and most valid way to address your research question.

Please note that your research question may be best answered by qualitative research. However, since most mainstream psychologists are still biased against qualitative research, especially the phenomenological variety, you may need to justify your qualitative method.

Furthermore, since there are no well-established and widely accepted canons in qualitative analysis, your method section needs to be more elaborate than what is required for traditional quantitative research. More importantly, the data collection process in qualitative research has a far greater impact on the results as compared to quantitative research. That is another reason for greater care in describing how you will collect and analyze your data. (How to write the Method section for qualitative research is a topic for another paper.)

For quantitative studies, the method section typically consists of the following sections:

1. Design - Is it a questionnaire study or a laboratory experiment? What kind of design do you choose?
2. Subjects or participants - Who will take part in your study? What kind of sampling procedure do you use?
3. Instruments - What kind of measuring instruments or questionnaires do you use? Why do you choose them? Are they valid and reliable?
4. Procedure - How do you plan to carry out your study? What activities are involved? How long does it take?

## **Results**

Obviously you do not have results at the proposal stage. However, you need to have some idea about what kind of data you will be collecting, and what statistical procedures will be used in order to answer your research question or test your hypothesis.

## **Discussion**

It is important to convince your reader of the potential impact of your proposed research. You need to communicate a sense of enthusiasm and confidence without exaggerating the merits of your proposal. That is why you also need to mention the limitations and weaknesses of the proposed research, which may be justified by time and financial constraints as well as by the early developmental stage of your research area.

Common Mistakes in Proposal Writing :

- Failure to provide the proper context to frame the research question.
- Failure to delimit the boundary conditions for your research.
- Failure to cite landmark studies.
- Failure to accurately present the theoretical and empirical contributions by other researchers.
- Failure to stay focused on the research question.
- Failure to develop a coherent and persuasive argument for the proposed research.
- Too much detail on minor issues, but not enough detail on major issues.
- Too much rambling — going "all over the map" without a clear sense of direction. (The best proposals move forward with ease and grace like a seamless river.)
- Too many citation lapses and incorrect references. Too long or too short.
- Failing to follow the APA style.
- Slopping writing.

## **How to write a research proposal (2)**

Source: [http://www.eastchance.com/howto/res\\_prop.asp](http://www.eastchance.com/howto/res_prop.asp)

When you are applying for a research degree, like the PhD, you will very probably have to write a research proposal as a part of your application file. A PhD is awarded mainly as the result of your making a genuine contribution to the state of knowledge in a field of your choice. Even though this is not the Nobel Prize yet, getting the degree means you have added something to what has previously been known on the subject you have researched. But first you have to prove you are capable of making such a contribution, and therefore write a research proposal that meets certain standards. The goal of a research proposal (RP) is to present and justify a research idea you have and to present the practical ways in which you think this research should be conducted.

When you are writing a RP, keep in mind that it will enter a competition, being read in line with quite a few other RPs. You have to come up with a document that has an impact upon the reader: write clearly and well structured so that your message gets across easily. Basically, your RP has to answer three big questions: what research project will you undertake, why is it important to know that thing and how will you proceed to make that research.

In order to draw the researcher's attention upon your paper, write an introduction with impact, and that leads to the formulation of your hypothesis. The research hypothesis has to be specific, concise (one phrase) and to lead to the advancement of the knowledge in the field in some way. Writing the hypothesis in a concise manner and, first, coming up with a good hypothesis is a difficult mission. This is actually the core of your application: you're going to a university to do this very piece of research. Compared to this, the rest of the application is background scenery. Take your time to think of it. When you have an idea, be careful at the formulation. A well-written hypothesis is something of an essay's thesis: it provides a statement that can be tested (argues ahead one of the possible answers to a problem), it is an idea, a concept, and not a mere fact, and is summed up in one phrase. In some cases, you will have no idea what the possible answer to a problem worth being researched is, but you will be able to think of a way to solve that problem, and find out the answer in the meantime. It's ok in this case, to formulate a research question, rather than a hypothesis. Let those cases be rare, in any way.

Another piece of advice when writing your hypothesis, regarding the trendy research fields: chances are great that they're trendy because somebody has already made that exciting discovery, or wrote that splendid paper that awoke everybody's interest in the first place. If you're in one of these fields, try to get a fresh point of view upon the subject; make new connections, don't be 100% mainstream. This will make the project even more stimulating for the reader. Imagine that you are writing about the trendiest subject, with absolutely no change in the point of view, and you are given the chance to make the research. Trends come and go, fast; what are the chances that, in four years' time, when your research is done and you are ready to publish your results, one of those well-known professors who dispose of huge research grants has already said whatever you had to say?

Remember how, in a structured essay, right after the thesis you would present the organisation of your essay, by enumerating the main arguments you were going to present? Same thing should happen in a RP. After stating your thesis, you should give a short account of your answers to those three questions mentioned earlier. State, in a few phrases, what will be learned from your research, that your project will make a difference, and why is that important to be known. You will have to elaborate on both of these later in the paper.

The next step in writing your proposal is to prove that that particular piece of research has not been done yet. This section is usually called Literature Review. Inside it, you have to enumerate and critically analyze an impressive list of boring bibliography. The conclusion you should - objectively! - reach is that your idea of research has not been undertaken yet. Even more, you use this opportunity to prove solid theoretical knowledge in the field, and build the theoretical bases of your project. One tip: don't review all the articles and books in the fields even if you mention them in the bibliography list; pay attention in your analysis to those you will build on. Another one: avoid jargon when writing your RP. The chances are great that the person(s) who will read your and another 1000 research proposals are not specialists in that very field - niche you are examining. If you are applying for a grant with or foundation or something similar, it might happen that those reading your paper are not even professors, but recruiters, donors, etc. And even if they actually are professors, one of the reasons busy people like them agree to undertake a huge, and sometimes voluntary, work, is the desire to meet some diversity, some change from their work - so maybe they'll read applications

for another specialisation. The capacity to get your message across in clear, easy-to-grasp concepts and phrases is one of the winning papers' most important advantages.

So far, you have proven you have a research idea, that you are familiar with the field, and that your idea is new. Now, why should your project be worth researching? Because it advances knowledge, ok. But is this knowledge that anybody will need? Maybe nobody knows for sure how the shoelaces were being tied in the XIXth century, but who cares, beyond two lace-tying specialists? Find arguments to convince the reader that s/he should give you money for that research: practical use, accelerating the development of knowledge in your or other fields, opening new research possibilities, a better understanding of facts that will allow a more appropriate course of action are possible reasons. Be clear and specific. Don't promise to save the world, it might be too much to start with. Even James Bond succeeds that only towards the end of the movie.

We approach now one of the most difficult parts of writing a research proposal: the methodology. In short, what actions are you going to take in order to answer the question? When will you know whether the hypothesis has been proven wrong, or has survived enough tests to be considered, for now, valid? Those tests and the way you are supposed to handle them to give rigor to your research is what is understood under methods. Methods divide in qualitative (interviews, questionnaires) and quantitative (statistics, stuff that deals intensively with numbers). For some projects qualitative methods are more appropriate, for some quantitative, while for most a mixture of the two is adequate. You should pick your methods and justify your choice. Research methodology, however, is too a complicated thing to be explained here. And this is why it's so tough: not much attention is given to teaching it in Eastern Europe. Try, before writing your RP, to read a bit more about methodology - on the Internet you will find for sure some articles - and decide which methods suit your project best. Don't forget: reading theoretical pieces of your work and providing a critical analysis of those is also a kind of research. It's fine to provide a rough schedule of your research; some grant programs will also require a detailed budget, even though for scholarships this is unlikely.

Conclusions: After working your way through the difficult methodological part, you only have to write your conclusions. Shortly recap why your hypothesis is new, why it advances knowledge, why is it worth researching and how, from a practical point of view, are you going to do that. Overall, the capacity of your project to answer the research question should come out crystal clear from the body of the paper, and especially from the conclusions. If this happens, it means you have a well-written RP, and you have just increased your chances for having a successful application.

One last word: how big should your RP be? In most cases, this is specified in the application form. If it is not, we suggest that you keep it at about 1500 words (that's 3 pages, single-spaced, with 12 size Times New Roman). In fewer words it can be really tough to write a good RP. With more you might bore your readers. Which we hope will not happen.

Good luck!

## **How to Write A Structured Essay**

Source: [http://www.eastchance.com/howto/struct\\_es.asp](http://www.eastchance.com/howto/struct_es.asp)

During your academic work, or even as part of your application, you will have to write essays on different topics. It is well to know that the generally accepted way of writing these essays demands compliance to a number of academic writing rules, mostly related to the structure of the essay. Some of these rules are outlined below.

Even when assigned, the topics on which the essay should be written are generally quite broad, allowing the narrowing of the topic. You should first do some research and try to get an idea about what has been written on the topic so far. Most often, your essay will build on, analyse or criticize one or more pieces of work, while building an own position.

In the introduction, you should clearly state the subject you are going to deal with, the narrowed topic, if any, and the position you are going to take. Specifying the position (thesis statement) is one of the most difficult parts of writing a structured essay. In the end, you should be able to state in one phrase what your thesis is. It should be narrow, specific and clear. You should not promise to analyse, review, interrogate or examine a problem, but to find and defend a specific side in the debate. As an example, a good thesis sounds like I will argue that the differences in economic status between the countries in transition are the result of economic policy options made at the beginning of the transformation process, rather than I wish to analyse the differences in the economic well-being of countries in transition. Version A takes a stand, defends it and by introducing a new idea, contributes to the debate, while version B merely points to some facts. The thesis statement is one of the few places in the essay where it is acceptable to use the first person writing, while most of the rest should be written in the third person. Announcing the organisation of the essay is what follows the thesis statement in the introduction. Depending on the size of the essay, you will develop a number of arguments to defend your thesis. It is advisable to enumerate those arguments in the paragraph following the thesis statement. † Three arguments defending the thesis will be presented. First, it will be pointed out that ... . The second argument developed will be that ... . Finally, it will be proved that ...

The body of the essay should discuss the arguments you presented, preferably in the order that you have announced. Each chapter/paragraph starts in a well-written essay with a topic sentence, restating the argument and the author's position to it. In case you use chapters, give them names that respect the structure and make the lecture easier. The discussion should follow the statement of each argument in a manner resembling the overall organisation of the essay: facts, ideas, and opinions of authorities in the field, as well as own reasoning should be brought in the discussion one by one. In the end, it should be examined whether the argument survived the debate or not, inside a conclusive sentence/paragraph.

Conclusions. When all the arguments have been presented and discussed, the essay closes the end, and you should be able to present the conclusions. If the essay has been well written and organised, the arguments have been proved and, together, they prove your thesis. You only have to show that, note the progress that has been made in the research of the examined subject, mention its possible implications.

A possible, but not mandatory section, usually met in academic papers on more important dimensions, is the limitations. Here you can note the limitations of your reasoning, assumptions held true, but which if proved wrong could invalidate your conclusions, aspects that have not been brought under scrutiny, possible conditions that could limit the impact of your conclusions, etc.

The specified size of the essay is, unless otherwise stated, under the  $\pm 10\%$  rule. That is, the entire text should not be shorter or longer than the suggested size with more than 10% of that size. Ex: for a 3000 words essay, it is acceptable to write 2700-3300 words. Use the Word's Word Count function to see the size of your essay measured in words.

In some, very very rare cases, it is very difficult to reduce your position in the essay to a thesis. It is acceptable in such cases, for reasons of clarity, to replace the thesis with a research question, that should meet the same requirements, with the exception of the fact that the author postponed taking a stand until the end of the paper. We do not recommend such an approach; still, if it happens, make sure you directly address and answer the research question in the closing of your essay. The reason we support these strict rules that, we admit, make writing rather boring, is simply put, quantity. Think how many essays will read the examiner or university recruiter, essays that have to say more or less the same thing. You surely want under

these conditions, in order to increase your chances, to make the lecturer mission as easy and pleasant as possible, don't you? This is why we recommend you to enforce those rules.

An academic essay necessarily contains a bibliography, where you quote all the sources used. Western universities tend to be very rigid with plagiarism rules. So quote every source you have used. In the body of the essay, avoid lengthy citation, use paraphrasing - saying with your own words what other guy said before. If you quote, make it clear, and give the source! In any case, referencing should be used only to start discussing an argument, never to end it.

In some essays, like those that you write when applying for an MBA, you have to answer question like "What would you do if you were the manager of a plant and why?" In this situation, the rules explained above do not apply that rigidly. You should maintain a clear structure, but a bibliography is no longer necessary, since your answer will be more practical-oriented than theoretical.

Good luck with this one as well!

## **How to Write a Motivation Letter**

Source: [http://www.eastchance.com/howto/mot\\_let.asp](http://www.eastchance.com/howto/mot_let.asp)

The Cover Letter (CL) is the document that accompanies your CV when you are applying for a job. For academic purposes, the document used is typically called statement of purpose, and is laid out after somewhat different rules. The CL is short (200-250 words), with a quite rigid structure and has the layout of a letter. Its goal is to introduce the CV, to bring to attention aspects of your activity that can help your application and are not listed or not presented in the proper light in the CV. In short, its goal is to answer the recruiter's question: "Why should I hire this person?".

**Layout.** The layout is that of a formal business letter: your address and contact details come under your name, in the upper right corner of the page. Underneath, aligned left, write the name, function, organisation and address of the person you are writing to. It is a lot better to know the name of the person who is going to read your letter. You should address the letter directly to him or her. In the case you do not know the name, an email, a little digging in the net or a phone call should help you get that name, in case it is not mentioned in the official announcement. Under the receiver's address, but aligned right, write the date of the day when you are writing the letter. You should spell the name of the month and use four digits for the year. You can put in front of the date the location, like Sofia, 2nd December 2000.

If you do know the name of the addressee, start with Dear Mr (Mister), Ms (Miss), Mrs (Mistress), Dr (Doctor), without the full stop that you might expect to follow the abbreviation, and the surname of the addressee, followed by comma (Dear Dr Smith,). In this case, you should end the letter with the salutation Yours sincerely. If you do not know the name, start with Dear Sirs, or Dear Sir or Madam and close with Yours faithfully. In American business correspondence, Yours truly is acceptable in both cases. Do not start the body of the mail with a capital letter, since it follows a comma.

**Structure.** Ideally, a cover letter has no more than four paragraphs. The goal of the first is to specify what you are applying for and how did you find out about that opportunity. The last one outlines your availability for an interview, suggesting in this way a concrete follow-up for your application.

The second paragraph should list your skills and qualifications that make you the right person for the position you are applying for. Read carefully the announcement, identify the requirements and see how your skills match those required. Do not simply state you have them, prove it. Ideally, you should start from your experience and show how you have developed those qualifications by doing what you have been doing/learning. Same as in the case of your CV, the result should portray you as an independent, creative person that can take initiative and deal with responsibilities, apart from the specific skills needed for the job. In short, the second paragraph should show why you are good for the job.

The third should point out why you want it. You should outline your interest for the skills you are going to learn if you get the job. The impression left should be that you can make a genuine contribution to the company's operations, while simultaneously deriving satisfaction from your work.

After the fourth paragraph leave a blank space, same as you should do in the beginning, after the salutation (Dear). Write the proper closing, as described above and your name. Do not forget to leave a blank space between the closing and your name and to sign the letter in that space.

**Enclosure.** It is customary for formal letters to mention whether you have enclosed any documents accompanying the letter. Simply mention enclosure, or write curriculum vitae under the heading enclosure at the end of the letter.

Print the letter on A4 white paper same as that on which your CV was printed, and put both documents in an A4 envelope of matching color. If you are emailing it request a notification that your documents have been received. Wait at least two weeks since the day you sent your application or after the deadline before writing again in the case you did not get any answer.

## **How To Write A Cover Letter**

When you send your CV for a job application you accompany it with a cover letter (CL). An academic CL is known as a statement of purpose and has a specific set of rules. The structure is formal and you will be expected to adhere to its conventions. The word count is 200 – 250 words. Within this parameter you will introduce your CV, highlight aspects of it that are particularly relevant to the work you are applying for, and take the opportunity to present other pertinent experience that may not be on the CV. Do not include anything that is of no value to your prospective employer. Be concise and to the point. The question in your potential employer's mind is whether you are suitable for the work.

### **Format**

A formal business letter is the correct format. In the top, right hand corner put your name and contact details. Now align left and below to write the name and address of the person you are addressing. If you only have the name of the organization then attempt to discover who you are addressing before you write. A phone call will help. Continue down and align right to fill in the date. The formatting for the date is as follows: Barcelona, 24th April 2007. Note that the place of writing is also included. This is not obligatory but it does add extra information. Begin the letter with Dear and then the title of the person as applicable (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr, or Professor) without the usual full stop that follows an abbreviation. Then add the surname and a comma. Leave a blank space and begin the body of the letter without capitalization of the first word as it has been preceded by a comma, unless you are beginning with "I" which is always capitalized. As following:

Dear Dr Armstrong,  
your advertisement for an assistant lecturer has attracted my attention...

If you do not have the name then begin with:

Dear Sir or Madam,

The letter should end with "Yours sincerely" if you have the name of the person and "Yours faithfully" if you do not. Alternatively, "Yours truly" can be used in both cases.

### **Content**

Write a maximum of four paragraphs in which you use the first to state the vacancy you are referring to and where you saw it advertised. In the second paragraph elaborate on your skills, experience, and suitability for the job. Do not simply repeat what is in your CV. Make it a little more personal while still remaining formal and relate everything you write to the advertised requirements. You can provide detail here on how you have gained your experience and skills and why you feel confident in applying for the job. You are creating a concise portrait of yourself so mention those qualities that align with the vacancy and give the best impression. Paragraph three is about why you are interested in the job and the nature of the contribution you can give to the firm. Here you need to persuade the employer that you will enjoy the work and give as well as gain. Finish with a final paragraph with information on your availability for an interview. You are looking forward to further communication with your potential employer.

You are nearly finished. Leave a blank space and close as described above. Now leave two blank spaces and write your name. Your written signature will be inserted in the space above your name.

Leave another blank space and under the heading "Enclosed" write "Curriculum Vitae". Alternatively you could mention the enclosure of your CV in the first paragraph.

The CV and letter should be printed on A4 paper and posted in an A4 envelope so that the CV and letter are not folded.

In an email submission attach the documents to a simple email stating that you have done so and request confirmation of receipt.

If you hear nothing within two weeks then contact the employer for feedback.

## ***How to write a Curriculum Vitae (CV)***

The CV (resume, in American English) is meant to introduce you and your background to somebody who does not know you and barely has time to get to know you. It should present you in the best possible light, in a concise and well-structured manner. There are plenty of resume-writing guides out there, that can teach you to the smallest details how to write one. Their regular problem is that they do not agree with each other when it comes to details. This is why we have put here together a number of generally agreed guide-lines, plus some specific details that could help EE students. A regular CV for business purposes should definitely not go over one A4 page. If you intend to use it for academic purposes and not for a job, the CV can pass that limit, on the condition that you use the extra space to describe academic activities, like conferences, publications list, etc. A well-written CV shows first what is most important, but contains all relevant information. To this goal, we advise you to adapt it to your target (specific type of job or scholarship). Cut information from your CV only as a solution of last resort, but pay attention to the order in which you present it in your CV.

Print the CV on plain-white A4 paper, save some of the same type for the cover letter - did we say that you should never, but never ! Send a CV without a cover letter - and find matching A4 envelopes. If the announcement does not say anything about a cover letter, you still should send one. It introduces your CV to the reader, attracts attention to certain parts of it that you want to bring to light, or mentions aspects that for some reason could not be listed in your CV.

To make it look neat, we suggest you use one of the Word pre-made formats, unless you are a computer-savvy and feel confident that you can produce an even better-structured and easier-to-read format. You will be able to introduce your own headers in that format; below we have a word of advice for those most-often met in a CV.

**Personal details** - here you should include your birth date, contact address, email, telephone number and nationality. In case you have both a permanent and study address, include both, with the dates when you can be contacted at each of them. Personal details can be written with smaller fonts than the rest of your CV, if you want to save space. They do not have to jump in the reader attention - you will never convince somebody to hire you because you have a nice email alias! If your CV managed to awaken the reader's interest, he or she will look after contact details - it is important that they be there, but not that they are the first thing somebody reads in your CV. You should write your name with a bigger font than the rest of the text, so that the reader knows easily whose CV is he or she reading. If you need to save space, you can delete the Curriculum Vitae line on the top of your CV. After all, if you have done a good job writing it, it should be obvious that that piece of paper is a CV, no need to spell it out loud.

**Objective** - this is a concise statement of what you actually want to do. It's not bad if it matches the thing you are applying for. Don't restrict it too much "to get this scholarship", but rather "to develop a career in..." the thing that you're going to study if you get the scholarship. If you apply for a job, you can be even more specific - "to obtain a position in... , where I can use my skills in...". You can use a few lines to describe that specifically, but keep in mind that you should show what you can do for the company more than what the company can do for you. Writing a good objective can be tough; take some time to think about what exactly are you going to write there.

If you, the visitor of our site, are who we think we are - a young student, or a person who has just graduated, you should start your CV with your education. Very probably, at this age it is your most important asset. We suggest you use the reverse chronological order, since it is more important what master degree you have rather than that, very probably, you went to high school in your native town. No matter for which order you decide - chronological or reverse - you should keep it the same throughout the rest of your CV. Try to give an exact account of your accomplishments in school: grades (do not forget to write the scale if it may differ from the one the reader of your CV is used to), standing in class (in percent), title of your dissertation, expected graduation date if you think this is an important aspect. There is no need to write all of the above, but only those that put you in the best light. Are you not in the best 20% of your class? Better not to mention ranking then, maybe you still have good grades, or your school is a renowned one. In any case, do not make your results better than in reality - you cannot know how this information may be checked and the whole application will lose credibility. Cheating is a very serious offense in Western schools.

**Awards received** - you should introduce this header right after the education, in order to outline all the scholarly or otherwise distinctions you have received. Another solution is to include these awards in the

education section, but this might make the lecture difficult - the reader wants to get from that section an impression about the schools you went to and the overall results, not about every distinction you were awarded. Still, these are important! Therefore, here is the place to mention them - scholarships, stages abroad you had to compete for, prizes in contests, any kind of distinction. Here, same as everywhere in your CV, write a detailed account of what happened: do not just mention the year and "Prize in Physics", but rather give the exact date (month), place, name and organiser of the competition. For a scholarship abroad, write the time frame, name of the University, Department, the subject of classes there - e.g. managerial economics - name of the award-giving institution, if different from that of the host-university.

**Practical experience** - here you should include internships as well. Don't feel ashamed with what you did, don't try to diminish your accomplishments! Nobody really expects you to have started a million-dollar business if you're still a student - even better if you did, though! Accountability is an important criterion for what you write in this section. The account should show what you improved, where, by how much, what your responsibilities were. The idea is that when you apply for a job you have to show growth-potential. That is, that you proved some kind of progress from one job to another and that especially at the last one you were so good, you could obviously do something that involves more responsibility - like the job you are applying for now. The overall result should portray you as a leader, a person with initiative and creativity - don't forget you have to convince the reader of your CV that you are the best pick for that job.

**Extracurricular activities** - if you're writing a professional, and not an academic CV, this is the place to mention conferences or any other activities outside the school that for some reason did not fit in the CV so far. A good section here can help a lot towards that goal of portraying you as a leader, a person with initiative, not just a nerd with good grades.

**Languages** - list here all the languages you speak, with a one-word description of your knowledge of that language. We suggest the following scale: conversational, intermediate, advanced, and fluent. List any certificates and/or results like TOEFL scores, with date.

**Computer skills** - write everything you know, including Internet browsers and text editing skills. There is no absolute need to know C++ unless you want to be a programmer or something. List certificates and specialty studies as well.

**Hobbies** - list them if space is left on the page. They look fine in a CV, showing you are not a no-life workaholic, but a normal person. There is no need to have a 20,000 piece stamp collection, you can mention reading or mountain tracking as well.

You can introduce other headers that suit your needs. Some CV's, for example, have a summary heading, that brings in front what the author considers to be the most important stuff in his/her CV. A references section, where you can list with contact details persons ready to recommend you can be added as well. If it misses, the recruiters will assume they are available on request.

## **Personal Statement Writing Tips**

*Compiled from: Essay Writing Tips, Office of Undergraduate Grants and Awards, Villanova University*

While writing your personal statement is usually the most challenging part of your application, it presents you with an opportunity to distinguish yourself from other candidates. It gives the selection committee a glimpse of your thoughts, priorities, dreams, fears, and inner voice that a transcript just can't convey. For that reason, you have to make your personal statement exactly what the name implies: personal. Your personal statement should not be your resume in paragraph form; it should be a compelling and intriguing invitation for a selection committee to get to know you better.

Before you start writing, do some thinking. Who you are and who you want to be? Where have you been and where you are going? Why and how do you want to get there? This is naturally going to involve thinking about your academic and career experiences. While you shouldn't shy away from them, you do want to place them in the broader context of you as a person. It's wonderful if you can articulate your goals to study medieval literature at Princeton with Dr. X; it's more wonderful if you can articulate which particular aspects of your personality and life experience draw you to medieval literature, Princeton, or Dr. X. Some intriguing prompts for this kind of thinking include Dr. Jane Curlin's Willamette website and the Proust Questionnaire. If you keep a journal, you might want to review it to glean some insights and ideas. If you don't keep a journal, consider starting one.

Give yourself plenty of time to write. No matter how well it may work for you in some of your classes, a personal statement is not something to dash off a few days before deadline. As Ernest Hemingway famously noted, "The first draft of anything is \*\*\*%#." Assuming this is true, you probably do not want to hand a selection committee your first draft. You shouldn't even hand them a second or third draft for that matter. The longer you let yourself write and revise, the more compelling and revealing your personal statement will become. Write early and often.

That said, don't be hard on yourself as you first set down to write. Even Hemingway didn't get it perfect the first time around. Since it's only your first draft, you don't need to worry about making mistakes, sounding stupid, or even spelling correctly. Let your thoughts roam and shut that imposing childhood grammar teacher's voice out of your head for the moment. Just write.

Once you've got your ideas down on paper, run it by some trusted readers. Professors (particularly those who are writing your recommendation letters), advisors, and Jane Morris are all excellent resources. Try to solicit feedback about the ideas, structure, and coherency of your essay rather than simple proofreading. Having other people rewrite and rethink for you is not the idea; having other people ask you questions that push you to think more broadly is. If you're going to do this, however, be ready to act upon such questioning and thinking. At this stage in the game revising often means more than inserting commas and adding a paragraph here and there; it sometimes means rethinking and revising an entire essay. You may have to give your personal statement a complete overhaul because you suddenly discover a better structure, focal point, or slant. This is normal. Do not despair.

As your thoughts become more and more polished, your writing should too. Check out a writing manual for guidance. Strunk and White's eminently readable *The Elements of Style* is an excellent (and concise) starting point. Kurt Vonnegut's short essay "How to Write with Style" frankly and humorously speaks to what he sees as the essential components of good writing. Call that imposing childhood grammar teacher if you need help with the mechanics of your essay, or find a friend with a particularly good grasp of the English language. However you accomplish it, your final draft must be free of grammatical and spelling errors, and should be as compelling and insightful as you can make it. It sounds like a tall order, but you are more than capable of doing it. Give yourself plenty of time, plenty of reflection, plenty of revisions, and plenty of help from trusted advisors, and your personal essay will do its job: present an intriguing glimpse into your mind and person.

Happy writing!

## **Writing Your Statement of Purpose for Grad School**

The graduate school statement of purpose is your chance to demonstrate your unique qualifications for and commitment to your chosen field by discussing those experiences, people, and events that compelled you to pursue it.

That's a lot to accomplish—especially in the typical two-to-three pages allowed for your statement. You can find the key to success by focusing on a few illustrative incidents as opposed to giving a superficial overview. Remember: Detail, specificity, and concrete examples will make your essay distinctive and interesting. Generalities and platitudes that could apply to every other grad school applicant will bore. If you use them, you'll just blur into one of the crowd.

Following "Ten Do's and Don'ts for Your Statement of Purpose" will help you write a compelling, focused essay — one that will transform you from a collection of numbers and classes into an interesting human being.

### **Ten Do's and Don'ts for Your Statement of Purpose**

The Do's :

1. Unite your essay and give it direction with a theme or thesis. The thesis is the main point you want to communicate.
2. Before you begin writing, choose what you want to discuss and the order in which you want to discuss it.
3. Use concrete examples from your life experience to support your thesis and distinguish yourself from other applicants.
4. Write about what interests you, excites you. That's what the admissions staff wants to read.
5. Start your essay with an attention-grabbing lead — an anecdote, quote, question, or engaging description of a scene.
6. End your essay with a conclusion that refers back to the lead and restates your thesis.
7. Revise your essay at least three times.
8. In addition to your editing, ask someone else to critique your statement of purpose for you.
9. Proofread your personal statement by reading it out loud or reading it into a tape recorder and playing back the tape.
10. Write clearly, succinctly.

The Don'ts :

1. Don't include information that doesn't support your thesis.
2. Don't start your essay with "I was born in..." or "My parents came from..."
3. Don't write an autobiography, itinerary, or resume in prose.
4. Don't try to be a clown (but gentle humor is OK).
5. Don't be afraid to start over if the essay just isn't working or doesn't answer the essay question.
6. Don't try to impress your reader with your vocabulary.
7. Don't rely exclusively on your computer to check your spelling.
8. Don't provide a collection of generic statements and platitudes.
9. Don't give mealy-mouthed, weak excuses for your GPA or test scores.
10. Don't make things up.

## ***Sample Statement of Purpose***

Business has always interested me as an undergraduate. In business, we study the results of people's actions. Over time, however, I have become more interested in the motivations behind those actions. At this point, I have decided against an academic career in business and have made a commitment to pursue a doctorate in clinical psychology.

In developing my honor's thesis, "The Effects of the Political Action Committee Donations on Personal Character and Leadership: A Comparative Study," I was able to yoke business and psychology by exploring the origins of personality as a means of understanding that leader's subsequent administrative methods. While completing my business degree, I have also been preparing for a future in clinical psychology. I have taken undergraduate content courses, including experimental, developmental, abnormal, personality, and social psychology, as well as psychology research courses.

My research courses, under the direction of Dr. Jim L'levac, have focused on the impact of inter- and intrapersonal functioning of adolescents and young adults by identification as children of alcoholics. These courses have allowed me to apply the research techniques and statistical skills that I have developed in both my political science and psychology classes. My duties in this research project have included creating a coding scheme for the data, working with undergraduate assistants to insure the data were coded and corrected in a timely fashion, and writing the SPSS-X programs required for data analysis. I have enjoyed being part of a research team in this exciting area of psychology.

In graduate studies at Duke University, I hope to continue research involving family systems and adolescent adjustment. I am particularly interested in learning about family therapies for borderline and identity-disordered adolescents. I recognize the importance of relying on empirically based therapies with a wide range of populations in conducting research. In reviewing the research interests of your faculty, I believe Dr. Craighead and Dr. Lochman would be particularly helpful, considering their research interests in adolescents and parent training, respectively.

After completing my Ph.D., I would like to teach at a research-oriented university where I can practice clinical techniques, conduct research, and instill in students my enthusiasm for research and the study of clinical psychology. In the long term, I am interested in the possibility of using my understanding of political science to impact public policy in the area of mental health. I envision a career in clinical psychology as a culmination of my varied interests and would appreciate the opportunity to pursue this at Duke University.

## ***Essay Writing Sample - The Engineering Student***

A simple bridge truss was the first structure I ever analyzed. The simple combination of beams that could hold cars, trains, and trucks over long spans of water fascinated me. Having the tools to analyze the loads on the truss further increased my interest in structures. I encountered the bridge in a textbook for my first engineering class.

Knowing that the professor, Mr. John Doe, was a tough teacher, I asked him for the textbook so I could study and get ready for the class over the summer. Just arrived from Belize, I was determined to succeed. In class we learned about forces on simple members and then we put the members together to form a simple truss. At this point I had almost decided that structural engineering was the career for me. From there the class just took off: We went on to frames, distributed loads, considered friction; basically we were incorporating real world considerations into structural members. I loved the practical, problem solving aspects of the field.

At UC my classes were even more advanced. In my analysis and design classes, I especially enjoyed studying steel design because we not only learned the use of the load resistance factor design but also applied that knowledge – I designed a four-story building. The professor was a practicing engineer, and he always related the subject to real life steel structures he had engineered, for example, the SB Medical Center, an all steel building with a base isolated campus. This is the kind of project on which I would like to work, designing the structure and considering how the building will respond to ground motion. After two quarters of structural analysis, I had come as close as possible to analyzing real world structures. Looking back I realize, I had learned great tools for structural analysis, but my "tool box" was still inadequate. I lacked a very important tool: finite element analysis. According to my professor, finite element analysis has revolutionized structural analysis.

Although I liked my classes, my internship experiences really confirmed my interest in structural engineering. While working at Caltrans as a student volunteer, I reviewed computer grading output for streets under construction. The computer suggested numbers for the road grading, and I had to plot the numbers and make sure there were no abrupt grade changes so the water can drain off easily to the sides of the road. It was exciting to know that I was the last checkpoint before the whole project went for approval. It was enjoyable working on something real – Main Street – but I was somewhat disappointed I did not have the chance to work on any structures.

At UC I volunteered through the Student Research Program to work in the geotechnical library. I worked directly with a doctoral student and helped him to develop a geotechnical data base for the local area. I interpreted the data Caltrans had collected and recorded it in a form accessible to the computer and easy to read. It took hours to finish the job, but I enjoyed the precision involved so I did not mind putting in the time. My supervisor liked my work so much, he hired me to continue the project during the summer. Working on this project also showed me the importance of soils in determining buildings' responses to earthquakes and awakened my interest in the response of skyscrapers to seismic stress and movement.

At First Choice U, I plan to enroll in the structural engineering and geomechanics program. In this program I hope to draw on my structural analysis and geotechnical research background as a foundation for studying more advanced concepts. I am particularly interested in researching the ties between the structural engineering, geomechanics, and applied mechanics. I believe research is necessary to acquire data and formulate theories, but it is just as important to know how to apply those theories and use that data in the real world. I hope to be involved in some structurally related research at First Choice U. I am particularly interested in two research facilities: The Structures and Composites Laboratory and the Earthquake Engineering Center.

After completing my degree in engineering and working on engineering projects, I know I want to design structures. That is what has fascinated me since I took Mr. Doe's class. I also know, however, that designing structures of a complexity that appeals to me requires "more tools in my toolbox." Those I can acquire only by continuing my education. To be competent and competitive I will need a masters degree. After completing my degree, I would like to work for an American engineering consulting firm and engineer complex structures and tall buildings, perhaps focusing on the problems surrounding designing for earthquakes. My long-term goals are to return to Belize and found my own engineering consulting firm there.

Structural engineering will allow me to pursue a career where I can be creatively involved in problem-solving and design functional structures, like the simple truss bridge that initially captivated me in Mr. Doe's

class. My classes, work at Caltrans, and internship in geotechnical engineering have increased my knowledge of and interest in structural engineering since I first looked at the textbook shortly after my arrival in the U.S. A masters degree will give me the up-to-date tools and knowledge to be competitive and competent.

## **How To Write A Winning Scholarship Essay**

*By: Kelly Tanabe*

*Co-founder of SuperCollege.com and co-author of "Get Into Any College" and "Get Free Cash For College."*

If you think that writing essays for college applications was an exhausting experience, we're sorry to break the bad news to you—there are more to come. Many scholarship applications require at least one essay—although they are usually (but not always) shorter than those for college admissions.

Before you begin wondering if it's worth the trouble to apply, the good news is that because you have already written quality essays for your college applications, you have some very good recycling possibilities. Plus this time you have the motivation of writing to be paid money instead of writing to spend money as you did for the college application essays.

Similar to admissions officers, scholarship committees see the essay as a window into the hearts and minds of the applicants. Because of this, essays for scholarships should be written similarly to college essays. They should be original, well-written, honest, and describe something meaningful about you. Scholarship essays should captivate the readers and make them care about the writer. All the strategies that you learned in the college essay writing chapters also apply to scholarship essays.

While a scholarship application may give you the luxury of writing on any subject—in which case you can easily submit one of your college essays—most give you a much more focused topic. For example, if you are applying to an organization dedicated to promoting world peace they may ask you to write about—what a coincidence—world peace. If you are applying to a civic group, they may ask you to write about your volunteer experience. In these cases you need to demonstrate in your essay that you are strong in that particular field or area or that you are the most suitable candidate because you fulfill the specific criteria of the award better than anyone else.

This may mean that you will have to write a new essay. However, since these essays are shorter and it is not expected (like the college application essays) that you spend weeks on them, they should be much easier to turn out. Once you get going you can usually whip out an essay pretty quickly, especially if you can cut and paste one together from several previous essays.

The final thing you should keep in mind when writing is to consider the kinds of people who will be reading your essay. An essay about how you wished you were born in a communist country because of your love for Marx may not go over well for an American Legion scholarship—many of whose members risked their lives fighting communists. An essay about the evils perpetrated by big business may not find much sympathy in a scholarship committee composed of Rotarians. Keep in mind, at all times, who your readers will be and make sure what you write will not offend them.

## ***How To Make The Most of Your Letter of Recommendation***

In life, we—as humans—rely on the recommendations of others to tell us where the cheapest place is to buy groceries, the best place to get our hair done, the best place to bank, to work. You name it and chances are we factor in—if not rely completely—on the opinions of others that know something first hand. Similarly, scholarship committees take into consideration the opinions (or recommendations) of others when evaluating whether or not you are the right choice to award monies to. This is done for two reasons. One, a letter from someone who actually knows and has interacted with you gives the committee an opinion of you other than your own (as you have written and filled out an entire five to ten page essay); and two, it allows the committee an opinion of you in a work or school environment. Ideally, this is what your letter of recommendation should do, although whether or not it actually performs the work it is supposed to rely heavily on the choices you make as an applicant.

How do you know who to ask for a letter of recommendation from? Below we will look at the Do's and Don'ts of picking a person to write your letter.

- DO ask someone you have known for longer than six months. Committees want the opinion of someone that actually knows you, not just a guy that knows your name from somewhere.
- DON'T ask a family member. Your family has to say you're great. That's their job. Committees know this and don't consider their opinions to be beneficial or objective.
- DO ask a teacher/professor or boss. Letters of recommendation are usually best received when written by someone who is considered an "expert" or "professional". This means that they want letters of people that have been in a supervisory role over you.
- DON'T ask a co-worker or friend. The last thing you want in a letter of recommendation is your buddy or coworker saying how "cool" you are and that you "really need the money". These are classic examples of folks that scholarship committees don't feel have the authority to offer an objective opinion.

OK, so your teacher or boss has agreed to write a letter of recommendation for you. To make sure that their letter does the work it's supposed to do, you need to make sure they understand all of the rules and that they have ample time to formulate and submit their letter. Here are a few things you should do to help your writer out:

- Give your writer plenty of notice. Most people say to ask three weeks in advance, but I think that is pushing it, personally. I think you should ask AT LEAST four weeks before the letter needs to be submitted and then send a reminder email two weeks before it is due.
- Give your writer the guidelines: how long, topics to be covered, etc. Also, make sure they have the address the letter needs to be mailed to OR that they give you the letter in a sealed envelope, as this is often a stipulation of scholarship committees.
- Say please and thank you. If the first person you ask is unable to write your letter, don't be offended. Ask someone else. Remember, a letter of recommendation is a gift, NOT a right.

Remember, your letter or letters of recommendation are an important component of your scholarship application, so be sure to treat them as such.

# ***Top Ten Tips for Winning Scholarship Applications***

*by Kay Peterson, Ph.D. at FastWeb*

Before you submit your scholarship application, check out these tips, provided by scholarship sponsors nationwide.

## **Tip #1: Apply only if you are eligible**

Read all the scholarship requirements and directions carefully to make sure you're eligible before you send in your application.

## **Tip #2: Complete the application in full**

If a question doesn't apply, note that on the application. Don't just leave a blank. Supply all additional supporting material, such as transcripts, letters of recommendation and essays.

## **Tip #3: Follow directions**

Provide everything that's required, but don't supply things that aren't requested—you could be disqualified.

## **Tip #4: Neatness counts**

Always type your application, or if you must print, do so neatly and legibly. Make a couple of photocopies of all the forms before you fill them out. Use the copies as working drafts as you develop your application packet.

## **Tip #5: Write an essay that makes a strong impression**

The key to writing a strong essay is to be personal and specific. Include concrete details to make your experience come alive: the who, what, where, and when of your topic. The simplest experience can be monumental if you present honestly how you were affected.

## **Tip #6: Watch all deadlines**

To help keep yourself on track, impose your own deadline that is at least two weeks prior to the official deadline. Use the buffer time to make sure everything is ready on time. Don't rely on extensions—very few scholarship providers allow them at all.

## **Tip #7: Make sure your application gets where it needs to go**

Put your name (and Social Security number, if applicable) on all pages of the application. Pieces of your application may get lost unless they are clearly identified.

## **Tip #8: Keep a back-up file in case anything goes wrong**

Before sending the application, make a copy of the entire packet. If your application goes astray, you'll be able to reproduce it quickly.

## **Tip #9: Give it a final "once-over"**

Proofread the entire application carefully. Be on the lookout for misspelled words or grammatical errors. Ask a friend, teacher or parent to proofread it as well.

## **Tip #10: Ask for help if you need it**

If you have problems with the application, don't hesitate to call the funding organization.

## ***Top Ten Mistakes Made on Scholarship Applications***

*by Laura DiFiore at FreSch*

How you can guarantee that your scholarship application will NOT win!

1. Forget to include your name and/or address! You would be surprised how many students do not include their name or address on an application!
2. Submit an incomplete application. Make sure you include all required references, photos, transcripts, and essays.
3. Be rude or abusive to the judges. Telling the judges that they will burn in Hades if they don't pick you, or that they are idiots because they don't accept applications from students in your major, is a sure-fire way to guarantee you will NOT be considered for this application, and that the judges will tell all their judge friends how nasty you are.
4. Submit a dirty application. Use a plate for your lunch, not your application. Don't spill beer on your application!
5. Apply when you do not meet their minimum requirements. If they require a minimum 3.0 GPA and you have a 1.2 GPA, don't waste your time!
6. Send it "postage due." Oops!
7. Mail the envelope but forget to put the application in it. Surprisingly common!
8. Submit inappropriate supporting documentation, such as including a picture of you at age 6 months when the application asks for you to include a photo, or including a copy of your arrest record as a reference! (this really happened!)
9. No one can read your application. The use of fancy, hard-to-read script typefaces on your essay, or handwriting that even a doctor would be ashamed of.
10. Spelling errors! Even ONE spelling error can doom your application! Remember, if you do not take the time to spell-check your application, the judges won't take the time to read it!

YES, I know that these seem like common-sense mistakes, ones that very few students would make... but these ARE the most common mistakes, made by 75% or MORE of all applicants! Last summer, I sat on a judging committee, and fully 96% of the applications contained THREE or more of the above errors. Why so many students make these mistakes is beyond me - but I hope after reading this, you will not be one of them!

## **Scholarship Applications that Win!**

by Bill Reynolds at FreSch

Bill, whose son won 10 scholarships, shared seven excellent tips on how to make your scholarship application stand out. I liked his tips so much, I've given them their own page! Many thanks to Bill for sharing his experiences!

### **Tip #1. ATTENTION TO DEADLINES**

Try and have your application arrive EARLY as possible, absolutely not after the deadline date! I like to send applications with a "return receipt requested" or "registered" to make sure they get there. I think that this also conveys a positive characteristic about the sender.

### **Tip #2 START YOUR APPLICATION WITH A "THANK YOU" COVER LETTER**

Sample Packet Cover Letter

1111 WinOne Street  
Pensacola, Fl 32503  
9 September 1999

Mary Smith, President  
Whatever Scholarship Committee  
Orlando Central Parkway  
Orlando, Florida (zip code)

Dear Ms. Smith,

This letter is an introduction of myself, (your name), and my desire to participate in the (whatever it is called) Scholarship Program. I have been accepted to (Name of your College) for the 1999 fall term.

I would like to thank you and the (whatever) Scholarship Committee for supporting college bound students with an opportunity for financial assistance through your scholarship program. Enclosed you will find my application form, high school transcript, ACT results, letters of recommendation, and other pertinent information. Again, thank you for your interest on my behalf and for the youth of our state.

Respectfully,

(your name)

### **Tip #3 ANSWER THE "MAIL"**

While this seems obvious, you must construct your application to make it EASY for the committee to see that you have provided every thing that was required. I like to provide items in the order that they are listed in the application. If possible, do not mix items on the same page. In another tip I am going to tell you to add extra items that were not requested to give your application that something extra. However, DO NOT add extra items if you are specifically told not to add anything extra. This means that you can not follow directions if you add items when your are forbidden to do so.

### **Tip #4 ADD EXTRA ITEMS TO YOUR APPLICATION (if not forbidden)**

This is where you get to be creative to find ways and things that present you in a positive light to the selection committee. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Write a short essay on MY EDUCATION/CAREER GOALS. Try to keep to one page but no more than two.
- Write a paragraph or two on how this scholarship award will help you reach your education/career goals.
- My son's guidance counselor gave him a paper that congratulated him on being in the top 10% of his class and acknowledged his hard work to get there. We included this because it put him in a "positive light" and his hard work at his academics was recognized.
- Before my son reached his 18th birthday, he registered for the Military Draft as required for all males when they reach the age of 18. He received a letter from the draft board congratulating him for doing his civic duty prior to his 18th birthday. You guessed it, this was also one of our "extra items".

A lot of scholarship committee members have military backgrounds or see this as good citizenship for this applicant.

- One of the best extra items is a letter of acceptance for admission to "any" college. If the scholarship application is not for a specific college, you will be able to use the award at "any" college. You do not have to use it at the college you used in your application. Later you can get more college acceptance letters and when you make your selection you can notify the scholarship award committee of where to send the award. Therefore, any letter of acceptance shows that you are serious but it does not "lock" you into using the award at that college.

These are just a few examples to get you thinking. I would limit my extras to three or four at the most. Too many and you "sour" your application. Again, MAKE SURE you are not forbidden to add extra items before you do so. Be creative to find things that make you look good and share them with the committee.

### **Tip #5 PERSONALIZE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

This is a tip that conveys you took the time to make this application special. When you have a letter of recommendation addressed to the specific organization or person that is administering the application process it says that you took the time and effort to make this letter "Special" for them. If all you have is a letter that starts "To Whom It May Concern", it is better than nothing. But if you can personalize the letter it says you cared to send the very best.

**SUB TIP #5a :** Offer to do the work for the writer of your letter of recommendation. For example, you want to apply to twenty scholarship programs. When you ask someone to write you "1" letter of recommendation they say sure. When you say you need twenty letters they say "sorry" I don't have the time. Once they write you one letter, ask if you can put it on the computer so the TO ADDRESSEE can be personalized for each application and your writer only has to "sign their name twenty times". Now your writer is happy to help you because you have done the work and make it easy for them to help you. If they have nice letter head, ask for blank copies to be used in this process.

**SUB TIP #5b :** This is an "ADD EXTRA ITEM/s" when the application does not require a letter of recommendation.

**SUB TIP #5c :** Try and get three to five letters of recommendation in your files. This will let you pick and choose which one or ones to send in for a specific application. I would never send more than three for an application unless the directions ask for more. I will cover some tips to give your recommendation writer in a later TIP.

### **TIP #6 - PROOF READ ALL MATERIALS and NEATNESS IS A MUST**

When you write anything you must use correct grammar and spelling. If you have a problem in this area ask your English teacher to help you with proofreading your essay, cover letter, extra items you have included, and even letters of recommendation prepared by others. When there are hundreds or thousands of applications to review, correctness and neatness become the first screen out factor. Only when the "pile" is smaller does the content of your application start to become a factor in the selection process.

### **TIP # 7 - SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION IN A CLEAR PLASTIC FOLDER**

Now that your application is complete, the final "presentation" tip is to place all of your items in a clear plastic folder, with a slide locking binder. I like the cheap clear ones so that your "Thank You Cover Letter" (Tip #2) is on top. For that final "touch" I also like to include a wallet size picture of the student in the lower left side of your packet. The next item/s in your application packet are those required in the application (Tip #3 Answer the mail). Next I add any extra items (if not forbidden) and finally I place any letter(s) of recommendations.

If "extras" are forbidden, you should consider NOT using a plastic folder, however, this can be a judgement call on your part. Read the application carefully again regarding extras. Some judges feel the plastic folders "give them more work" (to remove the applications from the plastic folder) while others have no problem with it, even though they may forbid extras. I know, this can be confusing! Your application packet is a great looking presentation of YOU, don't mess it up by folding it to fit a small envelope. Use an 8X10 type envelope so your application arrives looking great. Consider sending it "Return Receipt Requested" so you know it arrived!

## **5 Essential Elements of a Great Scholarship Application**

*An Article by Shah J. Chaudhry*

Okay, after going through the various types of scholarships you've completed your scholarship search and finally narrowed down your options to a selected few scholarships that completely suit your needs. Now the next step is to develop a first class scholarship application. In order to create a great scholarship application, the first thing you need to do is get organized. Start out with creating a file and start compiling copies of all the work you have submitted. Secondly, start making your resume. Your resume should list details of your high school career, work experience and any social groups you belong to. Next, you sort all the scholarships available according to the scholarship application due dates and finally, make a list of requirements that each scholarship application asks for.

There are four basic elements of the scholarship application process:

# Letter(s) of recommendation

# Transcript

# Personal statement (essay)

# Activity Sheet

# Interview

The rest of the article explains in detail about the 5 essential components of the scholarship application.

### **Letters of Recommendation:**

Most scholarships require (as part of the scholarship application process) you to submit a letter of recommendation as part of the scholarship application. This letter of recommendation can come from your high school teacher, an alumni, some prominent member of your community, or your employer. These letters are basically needed because the scholarship sponsors want to analyze your strengths and attributes from a point of view different than your own.

The first thing you should keep in mind is to make a request of a letter of recommendation early so you aren't panicking on the time of submission of the scholarship application. It should be well before your deadline so that the person who is writing the letter of recommendation has plenty of time to write a good and strong letter. You should notify the person when the scholarship application deadline is and contact them a few times before the deadline to remind them and see how the letter is going.

When you are selecting someone to write a letter of recommendation for your scholarship application, it is a wise decision to ask someone who knows you very well and admires you for the person you are and for what you have achieved. A person who knows you well can talk about your strengths and weaknesses better and can describe your accomplishments in a proper manner as compared to someone who does not know you very well.

As part of your scholarship application, make sure that you provide information about yourself to the person who is going to write the letter of recommendation. Give them your resume, your writing samples and other documents that display your talents and abilities. Talk to the writer and discuss the kind of image you are intending to portray and which part of your personality should be emphasized. Another thing you can do in order to help the person in writing a letter of recommendation for your scholarship application is to provide a written description of the scholarship so that the writer knows what you are applying for. As mentioned before, clearly inform the writer of the deadline of your scholarship application.

Lastly, don't forget to write a thank-you note to the person who has written the letter of recommendation for your scholarship application.

### **Transcript:**

Often, scholarship applications require a transcript from all of the schools you have previously attended. You should request this information from all of your past educational institutions as soon as possible. Sometimes, schools charge fee to issue official transcripts. Once you have contacted your past schools and requested a transcript, call them after a couple of weeks and make sure that they have mailed the your transcript to the proper address. In case you are delivering the transcript yourself, then make sure that you let it remain sealed and do not tamper with it because it may make the transcript invalid and ruin one of the most important elements of your scholarship application.

Several scholarship committees require students to submit an essay along with their application. There are several purposes due to which the scholarship committees require an essay. One of the main reasons is that these scholarship committees want to see a sample of your writing, and that they want to get to know the applicant. Another purpose is to enable the applicants to share something about themselves that may not be reflected in the statistics and facts they have provided. The essay is also very important because it allows the applicants to express their individuality and gives the scholarship committees an opportunity to know them.

The only way students can improve their chances of being selected from a huge pool of applicants competing for scholarships is by writing a stellar personal essay as a part of their application.

The way you write your application essay distinguishes you from the other applicants. It provides information about you that your quantitative data cannot.

The application essay is a result of hard work, often requiring countless drafts and several weeks of writing and rewriting. There are many approaches to writing the essay. There are some people who can sit down for six hours before the deadline and come up with a good essay, while others have to work laboriously for months writing and rewriting before turning in the finished product.

A good essay will distinguish you from the other applicants. Reviewers look for essays that are consistent and reflect your life experiences, commitment to education and personal characteristics. Sometimes a common experience can also be memorable and influential. You may also decide to write about your knowledge about a certain ethnic group or about some hardships you overcame. Essays should show the depth of your accomplishment and the quality of your character. It does not depend on what experience you choose to write about as long as it is appropriate and you should elaborate on the insights you have gained from that experience and the way it has influenced your life.

The people on the scholarship committee will be looking for reasons why you would be a good candidate, and why should you be granted the scholarship. Therefore, to present yourself in the best possible light, you could start out by making your essay flawless and following all the standards and requirements.

Your essay should be typed, double spaced, and should preferably use a twelve-point font with a standard font such as Times New Roman, and the margins should be standard size. It is very much preferable if your essay length is within the given limit, but if it is longer make sure it is no longer than ten percent. Try to make your essay as clear and concise as possible. Avoid sloppiness and stylistic errors. Make sure your essay satisfies certain basic requirements; you should pay attention on answering the essay question. Answer the question directly and address all its parts. Your essay should be well organized, logical, written with flow and easy to follow. The tone should be appropriately serious, sincere and modestly confident.

The first step in writing the essay is brainstorming. It is the process of coming up with ideas spontaneously from free flowing writing or talking. To brainstorm, you can simply sit down with a pen and jot down every idea that comes into your head. Another approach is to simply start writing and see where you end up. Record as much information as you can recall, such as schools attended, courses taken, jobs held, research projects undertaken. After you have jotted down the most basic and raw information possible, work on taking yourself deeper into the introspection process by tackling more specific topics.

Once you have completed the brainstorming process, you will have a rough idea of what you actually want to write about. So after that, you have to select the essay topic. When selecting a topic, you should keep in mind to choose a topic that allows you to demonstrate your skills and individuality, a topic that answers the essay question while telling the reviewers what they really want to know. While deciding on the topic of your application, keep in mind that you have to keep the reader interested while at the same time, revealing something about yourself in a way that makes you an ideal applicant.

After you have selected the essay topic, get down to actual writing. The key to a good essay is revising and re-revising. Revising is an integral part of essay writing and it is only after a great amount of revising that you can come up with an excellent essay. Once the revising is done and over with, you have your final draft before you. Be sure to avoid sloppiness and poor English. Also avoid biases against any religion, sexist comments, whining and politics. And of course, be sure to keep a printed copy of your final draft.

As mentioned before, some scholarships committees ask you to provide an activity sheet. An activity sheet is simply a list of all the clubs you have belonged to, all the sports you have played, all the hobbies you have,

all the awards you have gotten, all the volunteer work or paid jobs you have done et cetera. Make sure that all of these things are stated clearly on your activity sheet, some committees ask you to list them down in a chronological order while others require you to list these activities down in order of importance. The purpose of the activity sheet is that the scholarship committees want to know how much time you devote to the other things in life and how important extra curricular activities are to you. You should list down all the things that hold importance to you even if they are not organized in proper clubs or committees. The scholarship committees want to know all about your activities.

### **Interview:**

Some scholarship committees take interviews, usually as a part of the final selection process. This is because the scholarship committees want to meet you to make sure that you are a personification of all the values and activities and academics you have discussed in your application. You can use this interview as an opportunity to talk about your interests and your plans for future education. You should dress formally and arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview is scheduled. Do not let the interview make you nervous, just remember at all times that all the scholarship committee wants to do is try to get to know you better.

### **FACTORS CONSIDERED IN THE SELECTION OF CANDIDATES:**

There are many different scholarships and each scholarship has its own specified criteria. However, there are a few factors that are common in most scholarship applications. Those factors are listed below:

- # Academic standing (class rank)
- # Weighted GPA
- # Standardized test scores
- # Extra curricular activities
- # Submitted essay
- # Letters of recommendation
- # Financial need
- # Work experience
- # School and community/civic participation
- # Attendance record
- # Potential for success
- # Higher educational and vocational aspirations
- # Written communication skills
- # Character strengths (such as motivation, persistence, resourcefulness, etc.)
- # Demonstrated skills, aptitudes or experience

As mentioned before, different scholarship committees look for different things. Some scholarship committees might consider your academic records and do not even ask you for your educational aspirations, while others might only consider your financial needs and not ask you for your work experience. Scholarship committees might sometimes only consider one or two of the factors listed above or sometimes, they might consider all of these factors.

### **FINAL WORD:**

Most students seem to believe that the competition amongst people applying for scholarships is so fierce that it is only the most brilliant and outstanding students who are granted these scholarships. And due to this misconception, a lot of students fail to apply for scholarships. The truth is, that scholarships are not awarded to students who are brilliantly outstanding; it is true that some scholarships consider academic brilliance but there are a lot of scholarships that concentrate more on extra circular activities and special talents of students.

Apply to as many scholarships as you are eligible for, and make sure that you complete your application well before the deadline. Have your application proofread before you send it. Good luck!

## ***To Be Good Candidate***

Being competitive for a scholarship competition generally requires the same type of preparation asked of strong graduate school and job applicants. As a result, if you are laying a strong foundation for the career you intend to pursue, you will likely be a good candidate for scholarships in your field.

Start early! Many scholarships have application periods several months in advance of the actual award, and require extra preparation. Check out those lines below for further information on how to be a good scholarship candidate and maximize your chances of winning.

How to be a good candidate for scholarships ?

- Strive for excellence in challenging classes. Go beyond getting good grades.
- Get to know people, especially professors, advisors, administrators, employers. These relationships provide opportunities for career and scholarship networking, mentoring relationships, and potential references for the future.
- Get work, internship and volunteer experience in your field or in other fields of interest to you.
- Expand your knowledge of the world, people, places and events in any way you can- by reading, traveling, or participating in intercultural events, etc.
- Get involved in interesting extra-curricular activities that are meaningful to you.
- Seek out leadership positions within groups/activities that are important to you.
- Keep up on the news, and read a variety of opinions. Learn to defend your views and admit the strengths in others' arguments.

## ***Reference on Internet***

- [1] <http://nextstudent.com>
- [2] <http://scholarshipexperts.com>
- [3] <http://eastchance.com>
- [4] <http://scholarshipnet.info>
- [5] Milis Beasiswa (beasiswa@yahoogroups.com)