

SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

PERSONAL SELF-INVENTORY

If you're planning to apply for scholarships, chances are good that you will need to submit an essay as part of the application process. There is no one way to write a winning scholarship application. Make your scholarship application essay exclusive to you, personalize it. To get started, take the time to complete the following brain-storming exercise. It will help you formulate a list of experiences you may want to include in your essay or application responses. Write down important points and key words as they occur to you.

As you compile your list, think about how your experiences have contributed to your personal growth. Did they help you develop responsibility, teamwork, leadership or problem-solving skills? Highlight those items that were most impactful/meaningful to you or others.

What can you write about? BRAINSTORM ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:

- ◆ Membership in community associations, youth groups or church/temple
- ◆ Awards / commendations you may have received

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

- ◆ High marks, awards, placement on honour roll, subjects you excel in
- ◆ Any competitions you entered / projects you were particularly proud of

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT:

- ◆ Membership in any school-based clubs, committees or student government
- ◆ Philanthropic activities (YPI, charity fund-raising)

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES:

- ◆ PE Leadership / Team Captain / Project Manager / Tutoring / Squadron Leader
- ◆ Any role of responsibility, guidance, control, influence or providing direction to others

PARTICIPATION IN THE VISUAL OR PERFORMING ARTS:

- ◆ Involvement in drama, music, band, choir, art, etc.
- ◆ Competitions or contests entered and any awards won

ATHLETIC INVOLVEMENT:

- ◆ Team memberships, solo athletic activities and any awards or recognition
- ◆ Leadership roles: team captain, manager, organizing of, or helping with, events

WORK EXPERIENCE/EMPLOYMENT:

- ◆ Co-op placements or work experience and what you learned
- ◆ Paid work experience from summer or part-time jobs

SKILLS TRAINING:

- ◆ First Aid / Life Guard / Computer / Languages / Other Skills Development Workshops
- ◆ Mini Med School, BCIT Broadcasting/BioTech, RCMP Youth Academy, Model United Nations

LIFE EXPERIENCES:

- ◆ Travel / Loss of a loved one / Hobbies / Transitioning to a new country or school / Family

Scholarship essay topics can vary dramatically; however, most of them require a recounting of personal experience(s).

Use the brainstorming exercise you completed on the reverse to help you answer the following questions. **Focus on your more meaningful activities:** those commitments that you have been involved in for longer periods of time OR activities that have shaped your character or inspired you.

Show how you demonstrate the qualities that award donors are looking for: **teamwork, perseverance, leadership, problem-solving skills, service to the community.** Tell the reader what you learned as a result of your experiences rather than what the experiences were (**reflective vs. descriptive**)

WRITE YOUR RESPONSES ON A SEPARATE SHEET:

1. **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** What are your most important extra-curricular or community activities? What made you join or decide to get involved? How much time did you dedicate to this activity? Pick a particular experience you've had as a result of being involved and describe how it has benefitted others or shaped your development.

2. **ACHIEVEMENT:** What do you consider to be your most significant achievement in terms of its value to your school or community? Describe how it contributed to your own personal growth or benefitted others.

3. **LEADERSHIP:** Describe an activity or project where you played a leadership role. What was the goal you set out to achieve? What specific steps did you take? What was the outcome and how did you engage others to help achieve the goal? How did this experience shape you as a leader?

4. **PROBLEM-SOLVING:** Describe a change or initiative that you were responsible for implementing as a result of identifying a need. Why and how did you initiate the change? What benefits resulted?

5. **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES:** Explain how you responded to a challenge or problem that you encountered in your life. What made it difficult for you? What did you do? What did you learn? Did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty? How so?

6. **FINANCIAL NEED (if applicable):** From a financial standpoint, what impact would this scholarship have on your education? State any personal or family circumstances affecting your need for financial aid. How do you plan to finance your post-secondary education?

7. **ACADEMIC / LIFE GOALS:** What are your career aspirations? How will post-secondary education or training help you achieve your goals? Why have you chosen to apply to the particular program you have selected?
