



College of Arts & Sciences

Tips for Completing Scholarship Applications

General suggestions

Get started early.

Do not wait until the last minute to prepare and submit your application materials. Give yourself time to review (*and revise*) your entire application before you submit it.

Read/Follow guidelines.

Make sure that your essays and letters of recommendation address the qualifications required by the scholarship, that you have the proper number of letters, and that you have submitted all necessary documentation.

Write an essay for each application.

Your essay should read as though you wrote it specifically for each application. This may mean that five of the paragraphs are the same for each scholarship, and one is different. However, sometimes it means tweaking other parts of the essay as well, or even writing an essay with a different structure altogether.

Get others to review your essay.

Ask a professor or friend to read your essay for grammar and relevance to the scholarship requirements. Do this early, so that you have time to make any necessary revisions.

Get strong letters of recommendation.

Make sure that the people you ask for letters can write strong letters. Talk to your referees and make sure that they understand what scholarship(s) you are applying for and the issues they need to address in the letter. Most of your references should be from professionals—professors or employers—who can address the appropriate issues. Letters from friends or family members that simply say “he/she is a great person who deserves the scholarship” are not strong letters.

Stylistic Issues

Use professional language.

Do not use colloquial or informal language (or slang) in your essay. Do not use contractions (i.e. “don’t,” “can’t”). Do not use abbreviations (other than standard ones, such as “Dr.” or “Mr.”). Do not use vague or unclear words such as “things.” Be very clear about the ideas and issues you are discussing and use clear, concise, specific language to convey those ideas. Use straightforward statements with active verbs rather than passive or conditional verbs (“would” or “could”).

Proofread.

Run your essays through spell-check AND read them yourself for proper spelling and grammar. Spell-check will not pick up homonyms (words that sound the same but are spelled differently). You **MUST** check your work.

Do a final check of your application.

Review your application(s) to make sure that it (they) are complete and clean, free from silly errors. This is the only chance you have to make a good impression on the scholarship committee; make sure that you put forth the best possible application you can.