

Writing the Personal Essay Workshop
Friday, October 13, 2017
Callie Kitchen

When applying for scholarships, the Personal Essay is one of the most important parts of your application. This is your chance to let the Scholarship Committee or Donor know your educational and career goals, why you have selected your stated major and career goal, your life experiences which have influenced this decision, and your anticipated role in society after your career goal has been achieved. It is similar to a face-to-face interview with the Scholarship Committee or Donor to let them know why you feel you should be a recipient of a scholarship from Yosemite Community College District. However, to put this on paper can be difficult and even intimidating.

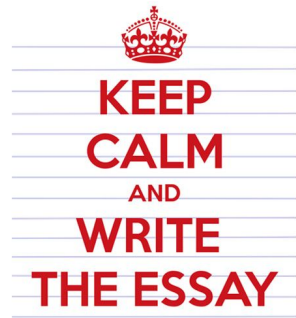
Many scholarship applications will give you a choice of essay topics. Select the one you find the most interesting. Many students make the mistake of choosing the topic they think will appeal most to the review board, but if you are bored by the topic of your essay it will be reflected in your finished submission. By choosing a subject for which you are passionate, you will be able to complete an engaging essay that will grab the review boards attention.

When writing your essay be sure to develop your ideas along a clear and logical path. Make certain the salient points are connected, and that the transitions flow naturally from one idea to the next. If you are asked to write about your college goals, avoid the cloying or obvious sob story. Scholarship review boards are immune to sob stories, so only attempt to tug at their heartstrings if you have a legitimate reason to do so.

Convey through a story: Your moment of clarity / epiphany, the moment when you realized exactly what you wanted to do and be. Your moment of change or inspiration where your interest was captured. Grab and engage your reader w/ your story, connect that with your classes taken, degree objective and how they apply to your goal, close with a reference to your story

ESSAY TIPS:

- Say what you want to say, and say it well: be clear, concise, and to the point
- Respect word limits and suggested lengths given to you by the school
- Proofread and edit your essays. Then do it again.
- Have family members and friends read it as well.
- Start early on your essays and be prepared to have two kinds: first, your “golden essay,” one you can tweak or use for several schools, and second, essays that answer specific questions used for particular schools
- Avoid clichés, sob stories, exaggerated stories, unclear or overly personal content
- Use the essays to explain any doubts or whatever you think the college wants to know
- Align your essay’s content and purpose to the unique qualities/mission of the school
- Grab and engage your reader with your story. Connect your story to the classes you’ve taken and degree objective and how they apply to your goal. Close with a reference to your story.
- Think of what the essay questions are REALLY asking of you



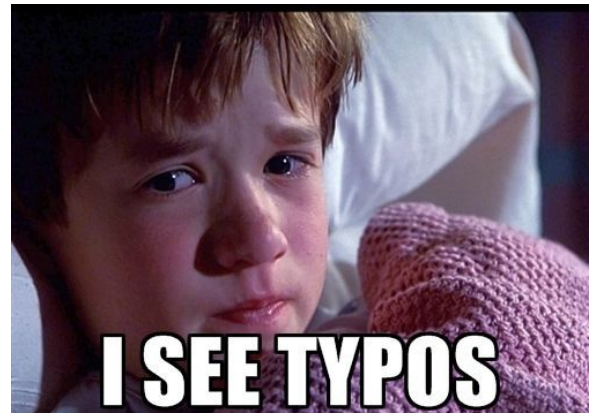
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Proofreading Tips

Start proofreading your piece once you are satisfied with its content and general flow and tone. These are finalized during the editing process. Plan on checking your work several times, checking for issues with punctuation, spelling, grammar, word usage, etc. Rushing through this step could cause you to miss errors.

General Tips for Proofing:

1. Read it out loud and also silently.
2. Read it backwards to focus on the spelling of words.
3. Read it upside down to focus on typology.
4. Use a spell checker and grammar checker as a first screening, but don't depend on them.
5. Have others read it.
6. Read it slowly.



Step Away: Spending even an hour or two away from your writing will help with both your editing and your proofreading. Give your mind a break before you dig back in and work on improving the piece you have written. Along similar lines, takes breaks while you edit or proofread. This practice will reduce lapses in concentration.

AAC: If you need someone to proofread your essay, the Academic Achievement Center is here to help! Open Monday through Thursday 8:30am - 6pm and Friday 8:30am - 1pm