



# Scholarship Essay Toolkit

Plan an authentic story, answer the prompt, revise with purpose, and submit with confidence.

FOR STUDENTS

*"For such a time as this." - Esther 4:14*

Free to download, print, and use for personal scholarship planning. Never include Social Security numbers, passwords, tax returns, or full financial-account details in scholarship essays or emails.

# 1. Build your story bank before writing

Strong scholarship essays are specific, honest, and connected to the prompt. A story bank helps you reuse experiences without submitting the same generic essay everywhere.

## Four moments to prepare

- ☐ A challenge that changed how I think or act
- ☐ A time I served, led, solved, created, or advocated
- ☐ A person, place, culture, or value that shaped me
- ☐ A future goal and the real reason it matters to me

### Moment 1 - what happened, what I did, and what changed

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### Moment 2 - what happened, what I did, and what changed

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## 2. The five-part scholarship essay map

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|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>OPENING</b>      | Begin inside a real moment: a decision, detail, line of dialogue, image, or action. Avoid dictionary definitions and broad claims.               |
| <b>CONTEXT</b>      | Give only the background the reader needs. Explain the obstacle or opportunity without turning the essay into a list of hardships.               |
| <b>ACTION</b>       | Show what you did. Use strong verbs and specific choices. The applicant - not the problem - should be the center of the essay.                   |
| <b>GROWTH</b>       | Explain what changed in your judgment, skills, priorities, or relationships. Reflection is more persuasive than simply saying you learned a lot. |
| <b>FORWARD LINK</b> | Connect the experience to your education, service, career, or community. End with direction, not a slogan.                                       |

A useful planning ratio: 15% opening, 20% context, 35% action, 20% reflection, 10% future connection.

### 3. Fill-in planning templates

#### Template A - overcoming a challenge

The scene: where was I, what was happening, and what detail makes it real?

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The obstacle: what specifically was at stake?

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My actions: what choices did I make and why?

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Growth and future: what changed and how will I carry it forward?

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## Template B - community impact or leadership

The need I noticed and why it mattered to me

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What I organized, built, changed, or contributed

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Who was involved and what measurable or visible result followed

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What I would improve next time

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## Template C - goals and financial need

My educational goal and the problem I want to help solve

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What I am already doing to move toward it

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The specific financial barrier - without sharing unsafe private information

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What this scholarship would make possible

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## 4. Revision rubric

Read the essay aloud, then score each item 0 (missing), 1 (developing), or 2 (strong). Revise the lowest-scoring areas first.

- ☐ The first paragraph begins with a specific, relevant moment.
- ☐ I answered every part of this scholarship's actual prompt.
- ☐ My actions and decisions are clearer than the background problem.
- ☐ At least two concrete details could belong only to my story.
- ☐ My reflection shows growth without exaggeration.
- ☐ The ending connects naturally to my next step.
- ☐ I stayed within the word count and removed repetition.
- ☐ Names, dates, facts, grammar, and scholarship title are correct.
- ☐ A trusted person reviewed it for clarity, not to replace my voice.
- ☐ The final file name is professional: FirstLast\_Scholarship\_Essay.pdf.

### AI AND EDITING

Use tools for brainstorming, outlining, grammar checks, and feedback only when the scholarship allows it. Do not submit invented experiences or language you cannot explain. Your voice, facts, and final decisions must remain yours.

## 5. Final submission check

- ☐ Correct scholarship and prompt
- ☐ Correct word or character count
- ☐ Application name matches the essay
- ☐ No track changes, comments, or placeholder brackets
- ☐ Readable PDF or required file type
- ☐ No sensitive account numbers or identity documents inside the essay
- ☐ Saved confirmation page or email
- ☐ Deadline and time zone verified

### My 48-hour revision plan

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