

# What Not To Do When Applying for Scholarships

Writing a scholarship application takes time. Sometimes a lot of it. That’s why it’s important not to make any obvious mistakes. The problem is that if you’re new to writing scholarship essays, you might not even know what those obvious mistakes are. That’s why I’ve put together this list. It tells you the top seven things you shouldn’t do if you want to win big.

## 1. Don't Go Over The Word Count

Many scholarship applications have very specific word counts for each section. Sometimes it's impossible to go over the word count because the online application will only allow you to write a certain number of words. In other cases, it's less rigid. Don't try to sneak in a few hundred extra words, because if they specify a word count it is in your best interest to stick to it. While some scholarship committees won't count your words, others will and might stop reading after you reach the word count. Some might even disqualify you. It's not worth it.

## 2. Don't Forget About Grammar and Spelling

Whether you're a lackluster or a stellar speller, your scholarship application should be pristine when it comes to spelling and grammar. Scholarship committees are often looking to reward outstanding students or students in whom they see potential. If they have a hard time reading through your application because of spelling or grammar mistakes they're less likely to see you as outstanding. Not only does it look like you didn't put a lot of time or effort into the application, but it also might lead to them misreading or misunderstanding what you were trying to say. Friends don't let friends submit scholarship essays full of mistakes. Get a friend or a family member (or two) to go over your essays to find any mistakes you might have missed. Even if you're a great speller, sometimes you just can't see the mistakes in your own work.

## 3. Don't Write An Insincere Essay

Have you ever been certain that someone was just telling you what they think you want to hear? When people aren't sincere, you can often tell. A lot of students think that scholarship committees want to hear a particular narrative and so they write them that narrative. The problem? Well, first all the other students have written similar narratives. Secondly, it doesn't feel authentic. I love listening to people talking passionately about the things that they care about. Tap into your passion and find a way to make it show on the page. Your goal is to get across why you're interested or engaged in the things that you're telling the scholarship committee about.

## 4. Don't Just List Your Accomplishments

Scholarship essay writing is a bit of an art. It's important that you stick to the word counts, but you also need to make sure you refer to as many of your accomplishments as possible. What often happens is that scholarship essays become a dull list of accomplishments. Boring. Aim to try to make the writing vivid. Don't just tell people what you did, try to incorporate examples and write about your involvements as vividly as possible. For example, if you organized door to door can drives, talk about how you were nervous when you knocked on your first door but got up the courage to do so because the cause was so important. You might also talk about how one of the recipients of the donation thanked you and how that made you feel. Did it make you want to get a degree that you could use to help people coping with poverty? Write about it!

## 5. Don't Try To Force Another Essay to Fit

The secret to applying to a lot of scholarships in a short amount of time is to adapt essays that you've written before for new scholarship applications. Because of this, the more scholarships you apply for, the easier it gets to apply for scholarships. This can lead you to get lazy, however, and it might make you inclined to try to adapt a scholarship essay that isn't really relevant to fit an application. Don't do it! You're better off not wasting your time applying for the scholarship than doing a bad job. You probably won't get the scholarship and you just wasted your time. Even though it's more work you're better off writing a new essay than trying to fit an existing one into the theme. Trust me – they'll know you adapted another essay.

## 6. Don't Be Too Negative

I've met some students had very difficult lives. They have wanted to share the struggles that they've experienced on scholarship application. This is often a good idea. In fact, there are many scholarships out there for people who have overcome obstacles to become successful. It becomes a bad idea when the applications become too negative or go into too much explicit detail. If you want to share negative things that have happened in your life, it's important to talk about them from a perspective of how they've influenced your growth and development and what they have inspired you to accomplish. It's better to talk about overcoming or trying to overcome your difficult situation than to simply creating a sob story that you hope will generate enough sympathy to help you win the scholarship.

## 7. Don't Wait Until The Last Minute

I've heard of a lot of students have waited until the last minute to work on a scholarship. Often, it's better to just forget about that particular application than to try to put together a scholarship application that will only ever be mediocre. Why waste your time even working on something for a couple of hours if the quality of your application will be so low that the likelihood that you will finish it and win is minuscule? Make sure to do your research on scholarships and create a scholarship timeline with enough lead time to allow you to create the best possible applications. The goal is, after all, to win scholarships and not just to apply for them



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**Q:** *How do I sign up to get the video series?*

**A:** You can go to [www.tamingthehighcostofcollege.com/scholarship](http://www.tamingthehighcostofcollege.com/scholarship) to start getting the videos (and more documents like this) sent to your email. It takes less than 2 minutes and all the resources are free.