

Tips for Effective College & Scholarship Essays– Podcast Transcript

Opening:

Hi, I'm Holli Kalaleh for the Oregon Student Assistance Commission, also called OSAC for short.

Today, I am going to talk about writing an effective essay when completing college admissions and scholarship applications.

Body:

Writing an essay is one part of a college or scholarship application that you have the most control over. It enables you to round out the rest of your application and can help you stand out from other applicants, so take the time to get it right.

Pay attention to the prompt and required format for each application. The review committee for each essay wants to read your response to *their* essay prompt, not a generic response, so make the effort to craft your essay for each application and remember to answer all the questions if an essay prompt includes multiple questions. Reusing essays without editing them to fit each specific application is not effective. Review committees will throw out any essays that do not adhere to their required format, so make sure to adhere to all page or word count limitations.

Make sure to plan your time effectively. Take note of application deadlines so that you can plan your time accordingly. Give yourself plenty of time to write, edit, and rewrite your essays.

The best place to start the writing process for each essay is to brainstorm. Think about what attributes make you a unique candidate. What experiences, influences, interests, activities, aspirations, or accomplishments set you apart from the other applicants? Write these qualities out and as you begin to compose your essays, think about how you can include these attributes.

When you begin writing your essays, think about the reader whose goal is to understand your main idea and to follow it through the essay while enjoying an interesting story. Keep the focus narrow and personal. Be sure to prove what you say; develop and support your main idea with vivid and specific details. Avoid clichés, generic, or predictable statements in your writing.

Once you've finished a draft of your essay, review it to make sure that it is clear, flows well, is sequenced logically, and provides specific details to support your main point. Take a break before reviewing it again, then write your second draft before asking someone else to review your essay.

Ask a guardian, teacher, or mentor to read your essay to check and double check the essay for content and spelling and grammar errors. Also, ask them to look for specific aspects of your essay such as

precision, word choice, voice, and meaning. Listen to their feedback and make the changes necessary to improve your essay.

Once you are confident that your essay is ready to submit, double check all the directions of the application requirements to be sure that your essay answers the prompt and follows all the formatting guidelines and that you will submit it correctly. Make a copy of your essay as a back-up in case something happens to your original and then submit your essay.

Conclusion:

College and scholarship essays are your chance to tell a story that convinces someone to believe and invest in you, so take the time to think about what is important to communicate about you. Make the essay clear and interesting, stick to the formatting guidelines, have your essay reviewed and edited multiple times, and be sure to submit it on time.

Closing:

Thank you for taking the time to learn about this important topic. For more podcast topics, please visit our website at www.OregonStudentAid.gov . From all of us here at the Oregon Student Assistance Commission, this is Holli Kalaleh. We look forward to helping you again soon.