
STEPS FOR SCHOLARSHIP SUCCESS

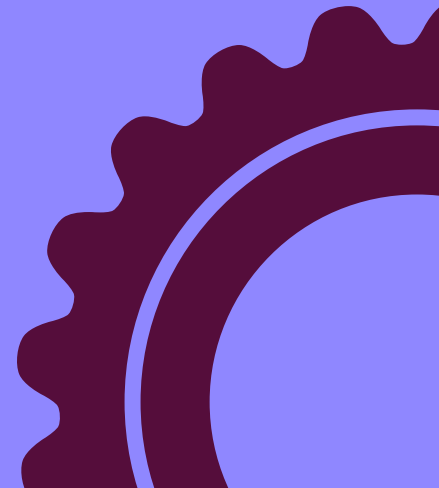
PART 4 OF E4FC'S 2016 UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP GUIDES



In This Mini-Guide:



- Writing Your Personal Statement: Telling Your Story
- Writing Tips
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- Before Mailing: Do a Final Check!
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Writing Your Personal Statement: Telling Your Story

The personal statement is the opportunity to make yourself stand out from other applicants. Make sure your essay tells readers something they would not have otherwise found out in your application.

Usually instructions are very general, such as “Tell us a little bit about yourself,” or “What is important for us to know about you?” The broadness of this topic can be overwhelming. Here are some questions to help you brainstorm some ideas:

- What is special, unique, and/or impressive about you or your life stories?
- Have you ever had to overcome unusual obstacles or hardships (economical, familial, physical)? What have you learned from these challenges?
- What details of your life will help the reader better understand you and set you apart from others? You might include personal challenges, personal history, people or events that have shaped and influenced you and your life goals.
- How are you the best fit for the scholarship? What have you done to prove that you are worth this scholarship’s funding?
- What are your personal, academic, and professional goals? What has led you to pursue these goals?
- How have you contributed to the community (extracurricular activities, community involvement, family responsibilities, employment)? What have you learned from these experiences?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate or more successful in your chosen profession or field than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give to the scholarship committee to be interested in you?
- How do you plan to give back to your community once you finish your education?

Note: Follow the directions carefully and adhere to word and page limits, formatting requirements and subject guidelines. Please keep in mind that selection committees will be reading multiple applications, and you do not want to be penalized because you went over the page limit. That being said, make sure to use all the available space they give you. a little bit of body text

Writing Tips



- Tell a story. Show or demonstrate an experience through concrete examples. If your statement is fresh, lively and different, the selection committee will remember you and put you on the top of the pile.
- The most memorable paragraph is the opening one, so focus on that one. The opening paragraph is where you can grab the reader's attention. Or you can make the reader yawn and say "What's this applicant's name again?" Distinguish yourself from other applicants right away.
- Topic-Specific Essay Tips: Some scholarships might ask you to write an essay, rather than a personal statement. Make sure that your essay directly addresses the topic and that you aren't simply pasting on a new topic sentence to an old essay. By all means, use sections of your personal statement, but don't just copy and paste it.

How to Get a Winning Letter of Recommendation



Identify and speak to potential recommenders EARLY in the process. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE. Notes on Timing:

- Arrange talks with potential recommenders
- Decide on best recommenders for you
- Ask for a letter of recommendation (ideally 2 months before due date)
- Give recommendation forms (at least 1 month before)
- Politely remind recommenders about the letter (at least one week before due date)
- Thank recommenders
- Update them on the scholarship selection process – if you have been selected for an interview, if you have been awarded the scholarship, etc.
- Teachers are very busy. Make their jobs as easy as possible. Give them a copy of your personal statement (even if it's just a draft), a list of your accomplishments/achievements/awards/extra-curriculars. Let them know what you'd like them to highlight/emphasize about you. This is not being overbearing; this is being helpful.

How to Get a Winning Letter of Recommendation



- Make information clear to recommenders. Pull together all scholarship info (scholarship name, your full name, due date, address to be mailed). Add information about the scholarship and its requirements and priorities.
- Make sure they are addressing recommendations correctly. Don't use a recommendation written for a different scholarship without changing the name of the scholarship throughout!
- Make sure your recommender is knowledgeable about you and can speak highly of your academic accomplishments, strengths, interests, academic and professional goals. Have an open talk with recommenders about your need for money and your immigration status.
- This is especially important if you are not comfortable talking about your status, since your recommenders can do so for you. It is important for them to fully understand your situation so they can advocate for you effectively. If you think your recommender is not supportive of you because of your immigration status, find a new one.
- Don't be afraid to ask recommenders to submit recommendations for multiple scholarships. Once they've written on recommendation, it's easy for them to modify it.

How to Get a Winning Letter of Recommendation

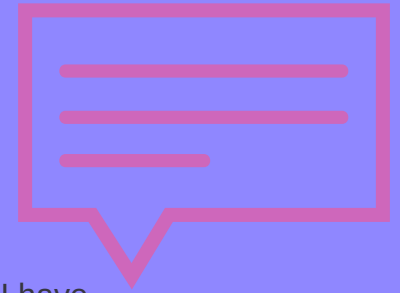


- Update them on your progress (whether or not you've been awarded scholarships).
- Ask recommenders if they will share a copy of their recommendation with you. If so, ask them for a “generic” recommendation (not addressed to any particular scholarship fund) that you can have on file and use if necessary.
- I'm a college student. Is it okay for me to ask my high school teacher to recommend me? Ideally you should have a current instructor write you a recommendation, but it is better to have a former teacher who knows you well rather than someone who doesn't know you very well.

If you are going to ask a former teacher, make sure to talk to that teacher about your current activities and progress in school, so they can update their old recommendation letter.

- Stay in touch with your former mentors and teachers!

Different Ways for Recommenders to Talk about Your Immigration Status



- Least Direct

Yoshi works harder than any student I have ever taught. She is more determined than any student I have ever taught. Her heart is filled with positive energy. Her mind races to accumulate and assimilate new information. And she faces heart-breaking obstacles—poverty, immigration status, financial independence since was sixteen, an utter lack of local family support and an almost untenable living situation with a generally uninterested aunt. She works so hard for herself because she feels she has no choice but to continually learn and grow so that one day she may be of great service to others. As difficult as her path has been and will continue to be, it is her goal to ease the path for those who come after her.

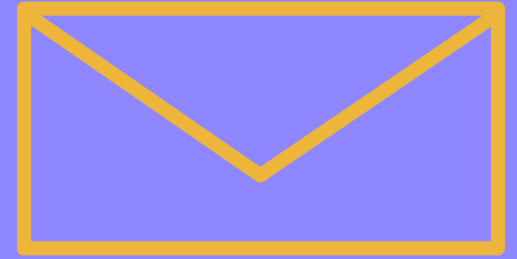
- More Direct

Julio is a first generation college student. He is a second year student majoring in Civil Engineering at San Jose State University...Julio is considered a minority at San Jose State University because of his ethnic background and low-income status, yet he has been able to compete and excel with students who have no economic needs or better educational resources than him before starting their college career....Unlike most San Jose State University students who do not need to worry about finances, Julio has to. He faces financial struggles on an ongoing basis due to his legal status which does not grant him any source of government financial aid.

- Very Direct

Luis is a non-native English speaker and an undocumented immigrant who will also be the first in his family to graduate from high school and attend a four-year college. And he will graduate—that's the type of person Luis is. Luis turned his back on the drugs and violence in his community to face the challenges of preparing for a post-secondary education. More aware and introspective than most young adults, Luis has realized that competing with more privileged students at the college level requires him to compensate for the inequities of life in East Palo Alto by preparing better and working harder.

Before Mailing: Do a Final Check!



1. Is your application filled out completely? Have you signed your application?
2. Do you have all required documents, including transcripts and proof of income?
3. Have you proofread and edited your essays? Did you follow the essay guidelines?
4. Re-read the whole package
5. Send it in before deadline - WAY BEFORE THE DEADLINE

Scholarship Interviews



Getting ready for the Interview:

- Make sure you know the interview time and location, and how to get there
- Do a mock interview with a teacher, counselor, or mentor
- Dress nicely
- Learn about the scholarship (background of funders, key people involved, activities required of recipients)
- Have questions ready to ask interviewers (you can ask them about one of the organization's programs that you might be interested in or other specific questions about the organization)
- Think of three things you definitely want to tell your interviewers (make sure you talk about these three things)
- Prepare your resume, bring it to the interview (in case they want to look at it) and read through it so you remember what your experiences/responsibilities were
- If you can, prepare a budget with your academic and personal expenses, committed/pending funds, and unmet need and bring copies of it to the interview

Scholarship Interviews



During the interview:

- Be early (know the location ahead of time)
- Shake hands with every person
- Say thank you (at LEAST once)
- Look them in the eyes
- Be prepared to ASK questions if it is appropriate and if you are invited to do so
- Sample Questions that Might be Asked During the Interview
- Why did you apply to this scholarship?
- What makes you stand out from all other candidates?
- How will you be able to contribute to our community?
- Tell us about one event or person in your life that has shaped you.
- Talk about your academic achievements/aspirations.
- Talk about your community involvement.

After the interview:

- Send a thank-you note -- preferably by mail, but email is better than no thank-you note at all.

If you are awarded a scholarship...

Send a thank-you note to all your recommenders

Follow-up regularly with donors

