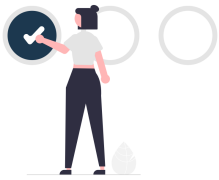


ScholarshipsCanada.com

Writing a Great Scholarship Essay

Some of the **biggest scholarships in Canada** require you to **show off your writing skills** in order to win. Whether you're sharing the story of how you got where you are, or you're laying out your plans for the future, many awards will want to hear from you directly. Read on to **get info on drafting your scholarship essays**. [ScholarshipsCanada.com](https://www.scholarshipscanada.com) has even more advice!

General Good Advice



Number one, be sure to **read the eligibility requirements** and question prompts closely! You could write a majestic, soaring piece of work, but if it doesn't answer the scholarship application questions, it won't be of much use.

Pay close attention to the instructions and provide what the scholarship admins are looking for. Don't go over the word limit, but don't drastically undershoot it, either. If you don't understand the requirements, **reach out and ask questions**. Contact info for most scholarship admins is available on [ScholarshipsCanada.com](https://www.scholarshipscanada.com).

Writing About Your Achievements

This is the most common topic for scholarship essays, but it can still trip you up! Writing in a boastful (but humble!) manner is no easy thing.

You may have to select a **specific accomplishment** to feature in your essay. If you're having trouble deciding, refer back to the essay question. You may want to focus on **achievements that have helped other people**, like a volunteering experience, or something that's long-lasting, like an annual fundraiser you helped set up. Scholarship admins like to see that **your efforts have had a durable, positive effect on your community!**

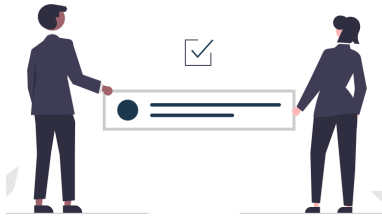


Be **straightforward in your presentation**. Try to avoid superlatives like "incredible" or "fantastic," and just lay out the facts. Explain your accomplishment, how it came to happen, and—this is important!—**what you learned from the experience**. The lessons you take away are as important as the achievement itself, so **think carefully!**

Once you've made your case for a specific achievement, try not to return to the topic too much. Instead, use your space to write on other aspects of your personality, or sharpen your storytelling and lessons learned.

Writing About Your Goals

Telling a compelling story about your dreams and ambitions can be difficult. Many people want to make the world “a better place.” Explaining how you’ll do so is tough!



First, you’ll want to **identify your goals for yourself**. This is a good thought exercise even if you’re not writing a scholarship application. Consider time scales of 5, 10, even 20 years. What do you imagine you’ll be doing? How will you get there? **What do you hope to accomplish, and learn along the way?**

The **next big question is why**. Why do you want to pursue your specific goals? Can you make a link between your past experiences, or an influential person in your life? **Why does this goal matter to you?**

You’ve probably got more than one goal in mind. When thinking about what to write about for your essay, well, **trust your instincts**. If a particular goal really sticks out to you—it’s your big dream, or it fits really well with the criteria of the award—then go for it! If you’re feeling stuck, though, **consider how your ambitions will affect your community** and the people around you. How will you leave a lasting impact on your world?

Connecting Your Story with the Award

First and foremost, your essay responses should **always be honest and factual**. This means you can’t make up details (no matter how fascinating they might be)! What you can do, though, is **align your writing with the expectations** of the scholarship.

This comes back to reading the scholarship expectations carefully. It also entails **reading between the lines** a little. If the scholarship is offered by an environmental clean-up organization, you may want to choose a topic related to pollution or climate change. If the scholarship’s coming from a retirement home, talking about your volunteer visits with the elderly might be a good way to get noticed. If it’s a community organization, focus on how your actions have supported and uplifted your community. **Write for your specific audience!**

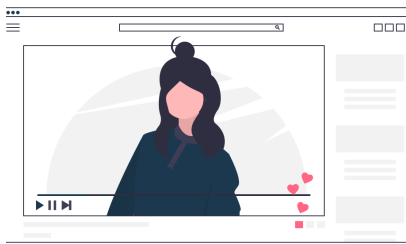


Standing Out: Poems, Art, and Videos

Some scholarship programs will explicitly call for less-common means of expression instead of a traditional essay. Poems, art, and especially videos are **becoming more popular for scholarship applications**. If the award

program doesn't explicitly call for a media submission, you may still be tempted to create one. Doing so has its **pros and cons**, so be careful on what you decide! (If the scholarship has an **"outside the box"** style or a "rebellious" theme, chances are media submissions will be much more welcomed.)

A **good media submission is purposeful**. It communicates a message that an ordinary essay could not. Media is great for sharing a sense of your personality and your world—it's less ideal for going into details.



Don't create a media submission just because it seems easier. Creating something worthwhile that elevates your chances at receiving a scholarship is **probably more difficult than writing an essay!** You'll want to put a lot of thought and effort into your idea, as well as time for refinement and editing. Generally, a last-minute talk-to-the-camera style YouTube video won't cut it.

If you're a poet, artist, or skilled public speaker, creating a media submission might be the way to go. You're in a position to **use your skills and share your art with the world**—or at least, a small part of it—and you'll stand out from the crowd. Shoot your shot!

Other Considerations: Resumé and References

Though your essay is probably the most important part of your application, **don't neglect other elements**, like your resumé and reference letter(s). Here's some quick advice on these; you can find even more advice on ScholarshipsCanada.com.

Resumé: Your resumé should be **short and to-the-point**. One page is great, two is okay. More than that isn't ideal: resúmes get an **average of six seconds of attention**, so keep yours short and sweet! Highlight **qualifications and achievements related to the scholarship** you're applying for, and please, **please spell check!**



References: Ask two or three people who know you well and are in positions of influence. This means no family members or friends—instead, think **teachers, employers, religious figures, coaches**. Be polite in your request, and give your referee a **couple weeks of turnaround time** along with your deadline, and a bit of info about the award. Send a gentle reminder as the due date gets closer, and after your application, **follow up with a thank you note**. If you win the award, let your referees know, so they can celebrate alongside you!

Best of luck in your scholarship applications this year!

