

Writing Successful Scholarship Essays

Scholarships provide students with an excellent opportunity to receive funds that can defer the cost of their college education. At Bristol, there are numerous scholarships that our students apply for, including the [Phi Theta Kappa All - USA Scholarship](#), the [Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship](#), and the [Bristol Foundation Scholarships](#).

Sample Scholarship Essays Prompts: Here are some examples of prompts that have been used for Jack Kent Cooke and Phi Theta Kappa scholarships.

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Describe a time that you identified a significant need and took the lead to create a meaningful solution that impacted your community, society, or school. What was the need or problem? How did you create the solution, and how did you involve others?

Know your audience: It is always a good idea to get to know the person or organization that is funding the scholarship. Do a little research about their goals, values, or relationship to the college. It is also helpful to learn the history of the scholarship to really see if you are a good fit for the award.

Know your writing requirements: Scholarship essays vary in length. They are sometimes broken down into page length, word count, or number of characters. Also, be sure that you are familiar with the specific prompt. As you can see from the samples above, the prompts can vary quite a bit, and scholarships may change their prompts from one year to the next.

Use the writing process:

- Start as early as you can. Waiting until the last minute doesn't produce the best essays.
- Brainstorm and outline your ideas first. It is always good to have a blue print.
- Draft a conventional essay. The 1-3-1 essay is a good idea here.
- Solicit feedback from a variety of people, including teachers, family, and friends.
- Schedule an appointment with a Writing Center tutor.
- Allow time to pass in between drafts. Fresh eyes catch mistakes.
- Edit multiple times. You really want to make sure that your essay is flawless.

Always do these things:

- Be authentic and tell your story. Write from your heart.
- Write about your future goals, community service, and financial needs if prompted.
- Use concrete personal examples focused on a specific moment in your life.
- Stay positive: focus on personal growth and progress.
- Address info that needs to be explained from your application. If you had a bad academic year, discuss how you have grown since then.
- Create an engaging introduction and establish the correct tone. First impressions matter.
- Incorporate an element of surprise. Show the reader what makes you unique.
- Have a particular point that answers the prompt and stick to it.
- Thank the committee for considering you. Politeness goes a long way.

Avoid doing these things:

- Avoid “My name is...” introductions. They already know your name, so this type of introduction just takes up space.
- Avoid clichés, repetitive wording, and generalizations.
- Avoid oversharing and melodrama. These allow negativity to creep in.
- Avoid repeating everything from your application. The essay should reveal something new.
- Avoid inferences; spell out connections between ideas.
- Avoid simply restating your thesis in your conclusion. Give the reader something to think about instead that emphasizes your candidacy.
- Avoid waiting until the last minute to write the essay.
- Avoid writing the bare minimum and exceeding the maximum. Aim for the middle of a word count spread.

Submission and selection:

- Don't wait until the deadline date to submit. Power outages can put a damper on your plans, and sometimes other things distract you.
- For digital submission, submit as a .pdf file. That will ensure that the essay appears as you want it to do.
- For paper submission, use higher quality paper. A thicker paper makes your essay stand out in the pile on someone's desk.
- If paper submission, submit up to 14 days before deadline. Sometimes the mail gets delayed.
- If selected, send a personal, handwritten thank you note. Again, politeness matters.

Writing a great scholarship essay literally leads to a cash prize for you. Contact the Transfer Services Office to see what scholarships are available for you.