



Alamo Colleges

Scholarship Essays Guide

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The MWC is a Writing Across the Curriculum initiative serving Northwest Vista College students, faculty, and the community through tutoring in writing skills, critical thinking, and building writing pedagogy. Effective writing is a cornerstone of education.

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Large Print Edition Available by Request

Feb 2023

General Scholarship Essay Practices

Main Ideas of a General Scholarship Essay

A typical scholarship essay is a personal essay or personal statement. You will need to dig down and talk about yourself in a way relevant to the prompt. Be prepared to do some research on the donor to which you are applying.

Language

Take care to avoid slang and text-speak. You are almost always allowed and expected to use the first-person (I, me, our), unless the directions clearly state not to do so. Use complete sentences with academic grammar.

Know Your Audience

A scholarship essay is likely read by a member of a committee or a volunteer. That person is a steward (protector) of the scholarship funds and is responsible for upholding requirements and standards.

They want to give you the money (!!) but they must rate your essay submission for relevance and quality.

Respect them and the scholarship fund to which you are writing – it will come across to them and improve your chances of success.

Typical General Scholarship Essay Prompts

All scholarship essay prompts should be approached as unique in that you are giving a genuine, individual, and clear effort to address the question, *but* you will likely find that many or most scholarship essay prompts are similar or follow a similar theme.

This characteristic means you can develop a foundational approach that you tailor to each application you complete.

Most prompts appear open-ended, so the challenge is to decipher what they want, and to stay on message. They also often ask several questions in one prompt. **Read them all the way through, then break them down into their separate parts.**

Prompt One (200-500 words):

Without including your name, tell us about yourself. This is your opportunity to provide information about who you are and what you do...

Provide a narrative introducing yourself (hometown, hobbies, strengths, weaknesses, goals and accomplishments). Examples can include what you are studying, what your academic and professional goals are, personal achievements, and why you are pursuing a degree at Alamo Colleges.

Section #1: Introduction/Thesis Statement

How is your career/degree choice inspired by your background and/or experience(s)?

How does your focus and/or activities show your commitment to your goals?

This can be 1-2 sentences long.

Section #2:

Describe an important person, moment, or story that inspired you to choose your college or career choice

When did it happen?

What was the cause?

What were the effects?

Most importantly, what goals did you decide on after this experience? Include personal and professional.

Section #3:

Describe how this person, moment, or story showed you your strengths and weaknesses

Show that you understand how you came to know yourself better because of the experience.

What did you learn about yourself? Use adjectives.

How did the experience and self-knowledge help you know what you should pursue in the future?

How did the experience give you the intent (determination) to succeed?

What achievements came from this? This can even be what you learned about yourself.

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Section #4:

Describe the activities you do regularly that contribute to your goal

Why did you decide to do these activities?

How are they relevant to your goals?

How are they a part of self-improvement (how do they play on your strengths and improve your weaknesses)?

How do they show your intent?

Section #5:

Bring it all together – why are you at Alamo Colleges as part of meeting your goals?

“I am pursuing my degree at Alamo Colleges because...”

What makes Alamo the best choice for you?

What aspects of the college match with your goals?

How are you using your resources and classes at Alamo to help achieve your goals?

Section #6:

Conclusion

Thank the foundation for the opportunity and restate you are a worthy recipient of the scholarship.

This can be one sentence.

Prompt Two (200-500 words):

Tell us why you are pursuing a higher education at Alamo Colleges and how a scholarship would impact you. This is your opportunity to explain your academic goals and how a scholarship would directly affect reaching that goal...

Section #1:

Your Conceptual Goal

What do you want to do with your life? This means “I want to help people,” or “I want to teach,” or “I want to invent new medicines,” or even “I want to support my family.”

Section #2:

Your Career Choice

“[Career] is a positive way to pursue this goal because...”

How are your goals achieved through your career?

Section #3:

Your Degree Choice

How is your degree the way to be prepared for your career?

Show you know about the degree you are pursuing. What are some important things you learn in your degree?

Section #4:

Why Alamo Colleges

“Alamo Colleges offers [Degree] and has the positive attributes of...”

How is Alamo a good place for you to be?

Why did you decide to attend Alamo Colleges?

Section #5:

How You Will Use Your Alamo Colleges Resources

What will you learn at the Alamo Colleges, both in and out of the classroom?

How are you taking advantage of the resources at Alamo? Are you joining clubs, going to tutoring...?

Section #6:

How the Scholarship Helps

“This scholarship will directly help with these [Expenses and Issues] and will mean that I can [Actions], and achieve [Conceptual Goals] through [Actions]...”

Be specific about how the funds will help. Do not just say, “It will make things easier.” What problems will they solve? Working less? Worrying less? More resources? What will you be able to do because of the funds that you could not do before?

See: <https://www.alamo.edu/nvc/admissions-and-aid/paying-for-college/scholarships/>