While there is no right or wrong way to write a great essay, a good scholarship essay …

… is original
… states clearly why you deserve to win
… has a main point
… avoids meaningless information
… is more than just a sob story
… is honest

When you finish your essay, get feedback from others, such as a colleague, teacher or friend. Don’t just ask them to look for grammar or spelling mistakes. Ask them to point out any unclear passages and, most important, ask them if your essay convinces them that you deserve to win the scholarship.

Scholarship Scams
If you have to pay money to get money, it’s probably a scam! Every year, several hundred thousand students and parents are defrauded by scholarship scams. Scam operations often imitate legitimate government agencies, grant-giving foundations, education lenders and scholarship matching services, using official-sounding names containing words like “National,” “Federal,” “Foundation,” or “Administration.”

“You’re a finalist!” or “You’ve won!” a contest or scholarship you never entered. Be wary, especially if they ask you for a credit card or bank account number to hold your “winnings.” Don’t believe it.

“First come, first served.” While you do need to get your application in before the scholarship deadlines, the “first come, first served” rule does not apply to scholarships.

“Millions of dollars go unclaimed.” Legitimate scholarship awards are predetermined. Sponsors work very hard to find the most qualified applicant.

“It’s guaranteed!” Scholarship searches can guarantee search “results.” They can’t guarantee you the scholarship money.

Scholarship Application Tips
Be organized. Stay on top of deadlines, gather all pertinent documents.

Be honest. Don’t exaggerate your grades, memberships, skills or qualifications. It is better to focus on the scholarships for which you might be eligible.

Follow instructions carefully. Some scholarships require you to write an essay; others may want letters of recommendation. Send in only what is requested.

Proofread your application. Review everything. Typos are a sure way not to be considered for a scholarship.

Keep copies of everything you send: If your application is misplaced, having copies will make it easier to resend your information quickly.

Send your application packet by registered mail: Many sources offering scholarships will not confirm receipt of your application. Consider sending your application via USPS registered mail so you know it was received.

Local Scholarship Resources
UALR Private Scholarships
UALR Alumni Association
Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund
Arkansas Community Foundation
Arkansas Lottery Scholarship

Cynda Alexander
Non-Traditional Student Programs Coordinator

University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Office of Campus Life • DSC 216
2801 South University Avenue
Little Rock, AR 72204
501.569.3308 | ntsp@ualr.edu

ular.edu/ntsp
Scholarships are funds used to pay for a higher education that do not have to be repaid to the provider. Scholarships may be awarded based on any number of criteria including academics, achievements, hobbies, talents, affiliations with various groups or career aspirations. They are available from federal and state governments, large corporations, local businesses, professional organizations, universities and individuals and each has its own requirements applicants must adhere to be eligible for the award.

Begin the process by completing the FAFSA and the general UALR scholarship application. Visit Admissions & Financial Aid in SSC 219 for the latest information. Note: Most scholarship deadlines are in the spring and require, in addition to an application, letters of reference and/or an essay. Plan well in advance if you are going to apply.

Identifying the Right Scholarship
As you search for scholarships, asking the questions below will help you determine whether there is a good match between each scholarship program and your circumstances and educational goals.

What is the maximum scholarship award? Awards can vary considerably, ranging from $100 to $10,000 or more. A typical scholarship award amount is $1,000 to $2,000.

Is the scholarship one-time only or can it be renewed beyond the initial award?

Is the scholarship based only on merit (no financial need requirement), or does it require both merit and need?

How is financial need defined for scholarships that require need? Each scholarship program has its own definition.

How does the scholarship program define merit? Some scholarships require a minimum grade point average of 3.0 to 3.5 and/or above average college entrance test scores, leadership, and other criteria that are highly competitive, while other scholarships have more flexible criteria and use a more holistic approach to select recipients.

Does the scholarship require admission to a degree-granting program? This is a common requirement, but some scholarships offer flexibility on admission status and may be available to non-admitted students, certificate-seeking students, and students enrolled in noncredit courses and programs.

Does the scholarship require full-time enrollment? This is also a common requirement, but some scholarships offer flexibility and may fund students who are less than full-time.

What are the other eligibility requirements? Is the scholarship targeted to a specific educational institution, specific field of study or major, residents of a specific geographic area, first bachelor’s degree, or master’s or doctoral level programs?

Is a personal statement or essay required? This is a common requirement, although it varies by scholarship program.

Are letters of recommendation required? This requirement varies by scholarship program and is not as common as some of the other requirements.

Is an interview required? This requirement varies by scholarship program and is not as common as some of the other requirements.

What is the application process? Many scholarship programs have their own application forms. Some scholarships may be awarded by the financial aid office to students who have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); these scholarships are usually included in the financial aid package. Other scholarships may be awarded by the admissions office to admitted freshmen based on an overall assessment of the admission application. These scholarships may not require a separate application.

What is the application deadline? Scholarship deadlines can be six to nine months preceding the start of the academic year, while others may be closer to the start of the fall term. Some scholarship programs also accept applications for spring and summer terms.

Have you searched for scholarships available in your community or from your educational institution? Generally, you have the best chance of receiving scholarships from these sources.

Scholarship Essays
Many scholarship applications require you write an essay. These essays are usually shorter (about 500 words) and take less time to write than college admissions essays. The personal essay is critical to winning a scholarship because it lets the selection committee get to know you beyond your grades, test scores and activities listed on the application. It is also your best opportunity to make a strong and lasting impression. Scholarship essays captivate readers and encourage them to care about you. Writing a good essay is not always easy. It takes time to put words on paper and finesse each sentence to convey the correct meaning.