

Scholarship Personal Statement Checklist

A strong personal statement can significantly boost your scholarship application. Use this checklist to ensure your statement outshines the competition!

1. Understand the Basics

What is it? A personal statement focuses on your background, goals, and character, showing committees who you are beyond grades and test scores.

Length: Aim for 500-750 words if no specific word count is provided.

2. Key Elements to Include

Compelling Opening (Hook): Start with a personal story, quote, or unique experience that grabs the reader's attention.

Example: "Every morning before school, I folded egg rolls in my family's kitchen — not just to help, but to keep the lights on".

Personal Story that Shows Character: Share a meaningful moment highlighting your work ethic or growth.

Academic and Career Goals: Clearly explain your educational goals and how they connect to your future career. Be specific!

Instead of: "I want to help people." Try: "I want to become a licensed clinical social worker to support children in foster care."

Financial Need: Honestly and tactfully explain your financial situation and why the scholarship would make a difference.

Memorable Conclusion: Wrap up with gratitude and confidence, reinforcing how the scholarship will help you achieve your goals and give back.

3. Step-by-Step Writing Guide

Brainstorming:

What challenges have you overcome?

What achievements are you most proud of?

What experiences shaped your goals?

Outline the Structure:

Introduction: Hook and background.

Body Paragraphs: Personal story, goals, financial need.

Conclusion: Gratitude and forward-looking statement.

Write Your First Draft: Focus on getting ideas down without worrying about perfection. Use your authentic voice.

Review and Polish: Set it aside for a few hours or a day, then re-read it aloud.

Edit for clarity, grammar, and tone.

Ask a teacher, counselor, or friend to proofread.

Tailor it to Each Scholarship: Customize components for each application, including keywords or values aligned with the scholarship's mission.

4. Common Mistakes to Avoid

Being too generic: Avoid simplistic statements.

Reusing your resume: This doesn't share your story or voice.

Using cliché phrases: Don't use phrases like "Since I was a child...".

Focusing only on struggles without showing growth: Showcase your resilience and accomplishments.

Forgetting to proofread: Always have someone else review your statement.

Writing too much or too little: Always follow directions regarding word count.