

# ONE DOZEN TIPS FOR WRITING A GREAT ASPIRATIONS

## SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

*From Bob Stuart (The same advice I give to high school seniors applying to college.)*

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- ☐ **1. EFFORT** is what matters most. You don't have to be smart to make an extra effort. Making an extra **EFFORT** to research your college and career options, and to write an essay you are proud of, will greatly improve your chances of earning a scholarship.
- ☐ **2.** Be sure to **complete ALL parts** of your essay. Identify a college or colleges of interest and courses, when required. Assess your effort on page 2. Make sure your teacher does that too. Make sure a parent or guardian or another adult who knows you well writes some comments about you. Make sure you have done whatever interview is required. These can be in-person interviews or online interviews or an interview you found on the internet. In-person interviews are usually best, but they may be hard to set up. If you need help with this, ask your teacher. You can find interviews by clicking on "Connections" at [www.mainecollegecircle.org](http://www.mainecollegecircle.org).
- ☐ **3.** Spell College correctly. Spell all words right. If you spell some words wrong in your essay, especially college, you are probably toast! Very good grammar and punctuation are very smart. This will all show extra **EFFORT**. Proof your work. Proof it again. Get others to proof it. If you spell a lot of words wrong, it doesn't look too good.
- ☐ **4.** Including additional schoolwork or other information that supports your message is always a good idea. It shows extra **EFFORT**. Doing a little more than is asked of you will always serve you well.
- ☐ **5.** Don't be boring! Make your essay **FUN** to read. Have fun writing it. **DIFFERENT** is good! Don't worry about being the only student to write an essay about a certain interest. Be courageous. I know that when scholarship committees read a lot of essays from one class and they all start with the same sentence and they follow the same format the scholarship committee usually isn't happy. The boy who wrote an essay about his true desire to save dugongs won a scholarship.
- ☐ **6.** Small **DETAILS** make a big difference. They often demonstrate that you know what you are writing about. If you wanted to become an automotive mechanic, you could mention 20 parts of a car that you know. If you wanted to become the next Taylor Swift and you listed your ten favorite songs by her, those small details might make the scholarship committee want to give you a scholarship so much that they just wouldn't be able to Shake It Off.
- ☐ **7.** There is no need to be fancy or use big words. True, honest, heartfelt, and **YOU** is better than any fancy word or idea. Simplicity and clarity can work very well.
- ☐ **8. A GREAT FIRST SENTENCE** is a great idea – something fun, something that engages the reader right from the start, something that makes the reader want to read the essay. But, make sure the first sentence actually connects to the rest of the essay. The reader should want to get more information from the rest of the essay to clarify the first, fun, short, engaging sentence. You may need to spend a lot of time and **EFFORT** just on the first sentence. "Freeze!" might be a good first sentence for an essay by someone who wants to become a policeman or a detective, or maybe a refrigerator repairman.
- ☐ **9. The LAST SENTENCE** should lead the reader off the page, beyond the essay, and into the future. The last sentence should remind the reader of what he or she just read and then help the reader see how you will have a positive impact on the future. The last sentence really matters because it is the last thing the reader is likely to remember. You want to end on a high note and

headed uphill and into the future. You may need to spend a lot of time and **EFFORT** just on the last sentence.



**10.** Unless you have a very cool name, DON'T begin your essay telling us your name and what grade and school you are in. We already know that, and it is a kind of boring start. (See #8.)



**11.** We are hoping to hear your **VOICE**. Scholarship committees spend a lot of time talking about **VOICE**. They can hear your **VOICE** when you tell stories about yourself and you share how you personally feel about something and you use your own language. Your writing style can be much closer to how you would talk with your friends than a dictionary or a thesaurus or how your parents might talk or what you might read in some fancy magazine.



**12.** Except for a few of you who are aspiring rappers, most of you have a last name. If you just put your first name and not your last name at the top of your application and your essay isn't about becoming a rapper, we think you didn't try very hard and you didn't care much. We care about **EFFORT**.