

Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society



Alpha Pi Gamma Chapter



*Making an Impact with
Your Words
The Art of Essay Writing*

Presented by Spring 2013 Vice President of Scholarship Nathan R. Hale

Sample Scholarship Essay Question

Why have you chosen your field of study and what talents and abilities will you bring to the field?

What is the most important sentence in any essay?

- *The First Sentence!*
 - *It sets the tone for the entire essay.*
- *Scholarship Awarders and Professors alike could read anywhere from several dozen to a few hundred essays in a day. Make them want to read yours!!!!*
- *Make it captivating, interesting, poignant, and something which draws the reader in.*
- *Your first sentence should be nonspecific and vague yet make an important broad statement.*

Sample First Sentence

Since the dawn of humanity, people have sought to understand those who came before them and looked to the past for insight on their own times.

Thesis Statement

- Thesis statement should be specific and concise.
- It should answer in one sentence the question your essay explores.
- It should answer all parts of the question or prompt.
- The reader should be able to understand the main point of your essay just by reading the thesis.
- The rest of the essay should in some way directly relate to your thesis.
- In short essays (<15 pages) the thesis is usually the final sentence of your introductory paragraph.

Sample Thesis Statement

I have chosen to study history because I believe a greater understanding of past generations and important events is the key to understanding the challenges the world faces at the present; the talent of eloquently expressing myself in writing, the ability to see patterns and make connections between different time periods and events, and the ability to analyze leadership decisions and understand greater overall significance are all aspects that will make me successful in the field.

Introduction Paragraph

- ❖ Should begin with a powerful first sentence, drawing the reader in.
- ❖ Should act as a road map for the rest of the essay, with each following sentence foreshadowing a Body Paragraph in the essay.
- ❖ Should outline the rest of the essay
- ❖ Should not include any information not found in the rest of the essay.
- ❖ Should end with the Thesis Statement, stating the main point of the essay.

Sample Introduction Paragraph

Since the dawn of humanity, people have sought to understand those who came before them and looked to the past for insight on their own times. Predating writing, history was passed down in oral tradition; since the inception of written expression, histories have been recorded in various forms. Throughout the ages, people have looked for patterns which link those who came before them with events that effect their own times. Historians are often most critical of the decisions individuals have made while in positions of leadership and look for the consequences of those decisions. I have chosen to study history because I believe a greater understanding of past generations and important events is the key to understanding the challenges the world faces at the present; the talent of eloquently expressing myself in writing, the ability to see patterns and make connections between different time periods and events, and the ability to analyze leadership decisions and understand greater overall significance are all aspects that will make me a successful historian.

Body Paragraphs

- Each Body Paragraph needs to go into detail on a point made in the Introduction, paraphrasing that point in the topic sentence.
- If writing academically, this is where you present your evidence from sources/observations.
- If writing for scholarship, this is where you present your life experiences and lessons that you've learned.
- Each piece of evidence you present should either prove your thesis, refute arguments against your thesis, or highlight the importance of your thesis.
- Your body paragraphs should include your own commentary on your evidence, stressing the point made in your thesis.

Sample Body Paragraph

Finding patterns and connections between events and people of different times is an important skill for a historian to have. For example, a historian should be able to consider the Feminist movement of the 1970s and understand that one reason for the movement was the cultural unrest and unfulfillment for women in the 1950s and early '60s which, in turn, stemmed from the greater role women played in America and across the world during the war years of the 1940s; all of which can find roots in the Women's Suffrage movement in the later 19th and early 20th centuries. The events of one generation often are a direct or indirect consequence of the events of previous generations. I find it very exciting to be able to find a pattern in human history and understand how and why events came to be through the lens of that pattern.

Conclusion Paragraph

- First sentence should paraphrase, or restate using different words, your Thesis.
- Each following sentence should summarize each of your body paragraphs, focusing on how it relates to your Thesis.
- The last sentence should be captivating and poignant, leaving the reader impressed and tying the entire essay together.

Sample Conclusion Paragraph

As a historian, I feel my greatest contribution to society can be offering insight to challenges facing society today by analyzing the past events and the implications of past decisions. Eloquent, expressive writing will help me successfully articulate my analyses in a clear and straightforward way. The ability to understand patterns and make connections will allow me to focus on the bigger significance of events. Empathy will allow me to metaphorically step into the shoes of history's leaders and examine the decisions they made. The major benefit historians provide to society is examining the past to understand the present and prepare for the future.

Scholarship Essay Specific Tips

- If answering questions about overcoming obstacles, it's better to focus more on overcoming the obstacle and lessons you learned than describing the obstacles in detail.
- Thoroughly read the essay question or prompt.
- Don't stray from answering the question as the Scholarship awarders have asked it.
- If answering a scholarship essay question about your major, you should know something about the field you are going into.
- Have someone read the question, edit your essay, and confirm you have answered it.
- Don't be afraid to ask professors for letters of recommendation! They will be honored you asked them.

Resources to use in Editing

- Make sure no matter who you ask to look at your essay, you give them at least one week to edit it and give feedback. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF OR NIGHT BEFORE IT'S DUE. Waiting until the last minute not only puts you in a bind, it also shows utter lack of respect for the editor's time.
- Use your professors!!! As long as you give them enough time to read over it, most Professors are delighted to give feedback on a scholarship essay.
- Use your librarians! Not only are they a great resource in helping you write your essays and showing you where to find sources, they can be a great resource in the editing process too.
- Use your college's resources. Most college campuses have a writing center and tutors on hand to offer you suggestions for your essays.
- You may use me. As your Vice President of Scholarship, I would be delighted to read your essays and give you feedback. My e-mail address is halen2@mail.tmcc.edu. I only ask that you give me at least a week before it's due to read it over and we schedule a meeting so I can offer suggestions in person.

Where to find Scholarships

- www.collegefish.org
- www.ptk.org/become-a-member/scholarships
- www.tmcc.edu/financialaid/scholarships/

Any Questions?