



# Writing Scholarship Essays

**How to score points, earn money, and  
change the world . . . in about 500 words.**

# Why are writing skills important?



- It is the most common form of communication in the workplace.
- Your overall job performance may be evaluated on your ability to communicate in writing.
- Several studies have concluded that the number one factor in determining whether an individual will be successful in an organization is whether he/she had effective written communication skills.

**“Writing is easy.  
All you do is sit down  
and open a vein.”**

- Red Barber



**The worst college or  
scholarship essay ever  
written is still better  
than the one that  
never was.**



**“Whether you think you can or think you can’t,  
you are right.”**

- Henry Ford

**“You have to expect things of yourself before you  
can do them.”**

- Michael Jordan

**“One important key to **success is self-confidence.**  
An important key to self-confidence is preparation.”**

- Arthur Ashe

# Scholarship Workshop Series



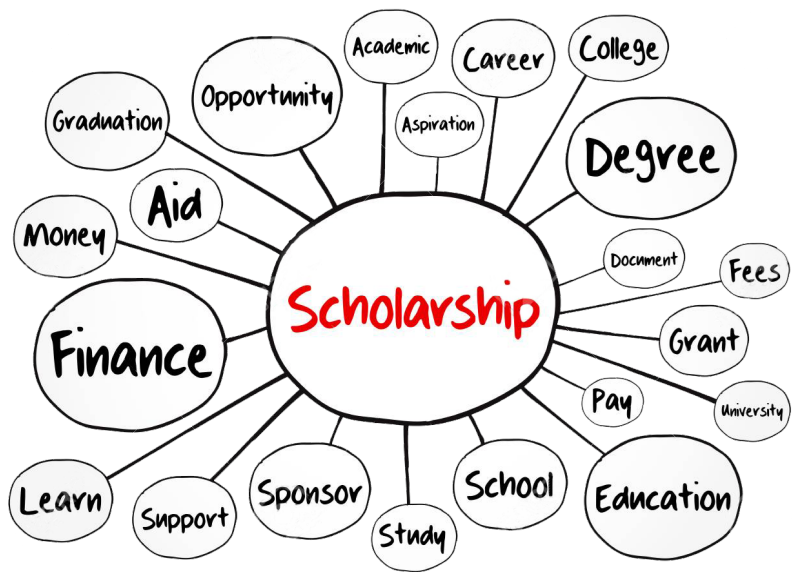
- **College & Scholarship Essay**  
(tonight)
- **GISH Counselor Presentation**  
Tuesday, November 17 at 7 pm
- **GIPS Foundation Online Application**  
Tuesday, December 1 at 7 pm

# The Night's Agenda



- **Writing scholarship essays (7 steps)**
- **Examples**
- **Ask us a question**  
(please... don't leave with it)

# Know where you are headed



## Types of Scholarships:

- GIPS Foundation
- Colleges of your choice
- Organizations
- Other scholarships
- I haven't decided yet



**“Begin at the beginning,”  
the King said gravely,  
“and go on till you come to  
the end: then stop.”**



*From Alice in Wonderland*  
Lewis Carroll

# 1

## Process

### ...sticking with the game plan

**Read the directions carefully** (you'll be way ahead of many)



- **Background - Audience - Directions**
- **Eligibility**
- **Essay**

[GIPS Foundation Guidelines](#)

# Jeremy J. Buckner Memorial Scholarship

---



Essay question (Max 500 words):

**Write a personal statement on why you are applying for this scholarship.**

# Dream Big, Work Hard, Stay Humble

## Sam Foltz Memorial Scholarship



Essay question (Max 500 words):

**Tell us about your dreams for the next 5 years. What is your plan for accomplishing these dreams. What does “stay humble” mean to you? Essay must show evidence that applicant has done research to become familiar with Sam’s character and accomplishments.**

# 2

## Reading is believing

**Read the prompt carefully,  
then answer three key questions.**

- **What are they asking me to do?**
- **Who will be reading what I write?**
- **How will they assess my essay?**



# Kaufmann-Cummings Trust Scholarship



Essay question (Max 500 words):

**How have your years at Grand Island Senior High shaped your character and prepared you for college?**

**“If writing didn’t require thinking,  
then we’d all be doing it.”**



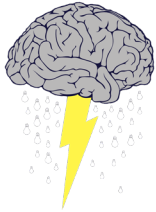
- Jeremiah Laabs

# 3

## Make plans & know your stuff (research)



- Think about the question or prompt. Bounce it.



- Brainstorm and pitch.
- Make an outline, something that works for you.



- Follow the [GIPS Foundation writing rubric](#).



# 4

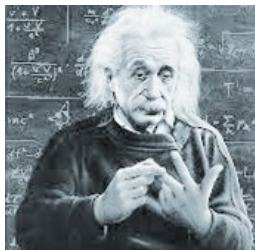
## Be clear. Be concise. Be careful.



- **Slap them upside the head** (metaphorically, please.)



- **But don't fade at the finish.**
- **Get there before they leave.** (In other words, land it.)



- **Every word should have a reason for being there** (word limits.)

**“The difference between the  
almost right word and the  
right word is... the difference  
between a lightning bug  
and lightning.”**

- Mark Twain



**“The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do.”**

- Thomas Jefferson



# Six ideas that will change the world.

Well, ok, your essay.

**1. This, that, these, and those need a partner.**

I will take this with me. (this what?)

➡ I will take my **lunch** with me.

# **Six ideas that will change the world.**

Well, ok, your essay.

---

## **2. Don't be redundantly redundant or wordily wordy.**

She will be home in a period of three months.

 **She will be home in three months.**

# **Six ideas that will change the world.**

Well, ok, your essay.

## **2. Don't be redundantly redundant or wordily wordy.**

It has come to my attention that there is a vast proliferation of undesirable vegetation surrounding the periphery of this facility.

➡ **I have noticed many weeds growing around the building.**

# **Six ideas that will change the world.**

Well, ok, your essay.

---

## **2. Don't be redundantly redundant or wordily wordy.**

She was a woman who knew what she wanted.

 **She knew what she wanted.**

# Six ideas that will change the world.

Well, ok, your essay.

## 2. Don't be redundantly redundant or wordily wordy.

Jose did not arrive on time due to the fact that the road was closed because of the fact that it flooded.

➡ **Jose was late because a flood had closed the road.**



# Six ideas that will change the world.

Well, ok, your essay.

## 3. Don't use inane phrases and words (pleonasms)

past history, final outcome, plan ahead, revert back,  
unexpected surprise, same identical, possibly might,  
10 a.m in the morning, frozen tundra, false pretense,  
spell out in detail, free gift

# Six ideas that will change the world.

Well, ok, your essay.

## 4. Use active voice.

A decision to vote on the issue was made by the committee this week.

➡ **This week, the committee decided to vote on the issue.**

# Six ideas that will change the world.

Well, ok, your essay.

## 5. Expletive constructions (There are, It is, There is)

There are four officers who report to the captain.

→ **Four officers report to the captain.**

It is freezing this morning.

→ **The temperature is 28 degrees.**

# Six ideas that will change the world.

Well, ok, your essay.

6. **Know the difference between denotation** (literal meaning) **and connotation** (emotional or understood meaning)

**She was sneaky when it came to handing out compliments.**

(malicious or tricky?)

# 5

## Be real and be honest

- **Make it personal. Passion/emotion are fine** (logos, ethos, pathos) **within reason.**
- **Details and examples** (get real/be specific)
- **Perspective** (don't whine - stay positive)

**“Fill your paper with the  
breathings of your heart.”**

- William Wadsworth





# **Sweat the small stuff (details), name names**

---

- **Warm paint colors, like red or pink, can have a stimulating effect on a room's inhabitants.**
- **When going to a formal dinner, it is important to wear your best suit, tie, and shoes.** (Rather than: When going to a formal dinner, it is important to wear your best clothing.)
- **John threw down a thunderous dunk over Millard West's 6'7" center.** (John could jump high.)



# **Sweat the small stuff (details), name names**

---

- **When you go camping, always make sure to pack first-aid supplies such as bandages, antiseptic cream, and pain medication.**
- **The students in Mr. Stockhurst's history class build models of Civil War battlegrounds with their own hands, and then reenact the battles in class. By acting out the events of history, they learn to see how those events fit together, and how some caused others.**  
(Learning is aided by hands-on experience.)

# The answers to yes and no questions are... yes and no. Full stop.

---

Should I begin with “In this essay...” or “In my opinion ...?” **NO**

Should I research the organization sponsoring the scholarship? **YES**

Should I trust only spellcheck and grammar check for proofing? **NO**

Should my focus be on asking for the money? **NO**

Should I use words from a thesaurus that are completely new to me? **NO**

Should I open with a quote? **NO** (with exceptions)

# 6

## Slow cook, don't flash fry... and...

- **Give it (and you) a rest every once and awhile.**



# 6

## ... Edit in beast mode

**Be a ruthless editor. One error can taint an entire essay.** It's as easy as ABC.

**A. Insist on the essay being yours.** No one else is better qualified. If your essay doesn't sound like you, it isn't you. Check the rhythm, the language (word choices), and most of all the story.

# 6

## ... Edit in beast mode

**Be a ruthless editor. One error can taint an entire essay. It's as easy as ABC.**

**B. Proofread. Edit. Have three others edit.  
Rewrite. Rinse. Repeat.  
(Until it shines and hits all the right notes.)**

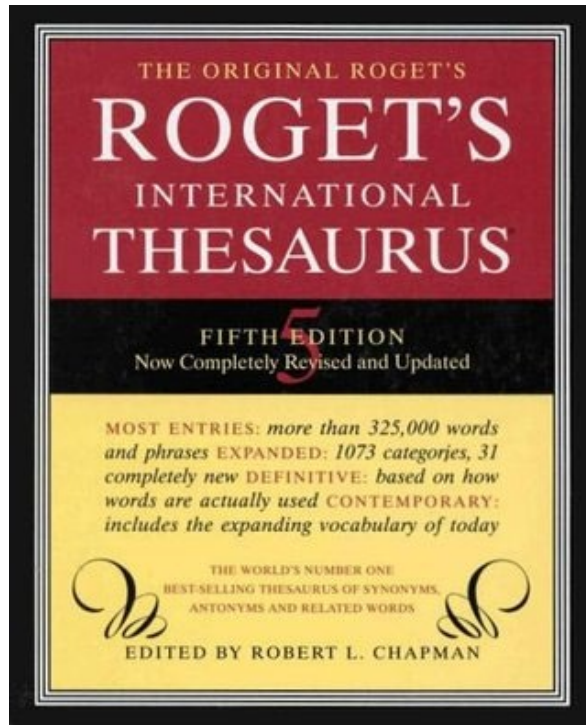
# 6

## ... Edit in beast mode

**Be a ruthless editor. One error can taint an entire essay. It's as easy as ABC.**

**C. Give yourself the time to be good.**

# Stay in your verbal lane



# Punctuation, etc... Oh, the humanity!



**Let's eat Grandpa.**

**Let's eat, Grandpa.**

---

**Commas Save Lives**



# Dig you some rhythm

**“This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. The sounds of it drones. It’s like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety.**

**Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes, when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals – sounds that say listen to this, it is important.”**

**- Gary Provost**

# 7

## Don't try to be a hero flying solo

- **Assemble a good flight crew**

Parents, siblings,  
trusted friends,  
teachers,  
word nerds

- **Soar**



# Personal Narrative

---

## Read Essay 1A

- Click the link shared in the chat
- DO NOT close the Zoom
- Read the essay

# Personal Narrative

---

## Essay 1A

- **Personal**
- **Optimistic**
- **Connects life experiences well to career choices**

# Personal Narrative

---

## Read Essay 1B

- Click the link shared in the chat
- DO NOT close the Zoom
- Read the essay

# Personal Narrative

---

## Essay 1B

- **Pays off the theme (perseverance) quite well**
- **Connects skills/skill details to theme**
- **Isn't afraid to be descriptive (shows rather than tells)**

# Kaufmann-Cummings

---

## Read Essay 2A

- Click the link shared in the chat
- DO NOT close the Zoom
- Read the essay

# Kaufmann-Cummings

---

## Essay 2A

- **Structure** (says what he's going to tell you then does)
- **Clarity and economy**
- **Word choice** (*inoculation* and *chaos swirl*)



# Kaufmann-Cummings

---

## Read Essay 2B

- Click the link shared in the chat
- DO NOT close the Zoom
- Read the essay

# Kaufmann-Cummings

---

## Essay 2B

- **Structure**
- **Organization**
- **Enthusiasms**

# To Review...

1. **Process... sticking with the game plan.**
2. **Reading is believing.**
3. **Make plans & know your stuff (research).**
4. **Be clear. Be concise. Be careful.**
5. **Be real and be real honest.**
6. **Slow cook, don't flash fry... and... edit in beast mode.**
7. **Don't try to be a hero flying solo.**

# Tips for GPS Foundation Scholarships

- **Proofread for errors**
- **Do not use your name**
- **Start early**
- **Stick to the checklist**

[2021 Senior Checklist \(pdf\)](#)

[GPS Foundation Essay Tips \(pdf\)](#)



# GIPS Foundation: Personal Statements

- 1. Tell us about you.** The best personal statements describe strengths and achievements in an intimate and unique way, capitalizing on life experiences which have molded you into a worthy candidate. Let the selection committee know who you are through your writing. (Max 500 words)
- 2. What are your personal and career goals? What is your plan for achieving these goals?** (Max 500 words)
- 3. Attending college can be expensive. What is your financial plan for achieving this goal?** (Max 500 words)

# The road to perfect is paved with practice.

- Study the rubric
- Study other essays. What worked? What didn't?
- Connect with your scholarships.
- Stick to the checklist

[GIPS Foundation Scholarship Guidelines](https://gipsfoundation.org/what-we-do/scholarships)



# Scholarship Workshop Series



- **College & Scholarship Essay**  
(tonight)
- **GISH Counselor Presentation**  
Tuesday, November 17 at 7 pm
- **GIPS Foundation Online Application**  
Tuesday, December 1 at 7 pm

**What are your  
questions?**

