

A guide to writing an excellent WYCF Scholarship application

At WYCF, we want to welcome **all** applicants, no matter their background. The simple truth is that some applicants are great at writing...while others have other strengths.

Whether you're a whiz at writing, or you're less comfortable with it, good writing is an **important way to make a good impression** on the committees who review your application.

This doesn't mean you have to use an enormous vocabulary, complex sentences, nuanced metaphors etc.. (In fact, for this kind of writing, it's generally best not to.) What it *does* mean, though, is that clean, error-free writing will make you look *much* better to the people reading your application.

The simple truth is that it's *almost always* the essays that set apart scholarship winners. With that in mind, here are WYCF's 10 Pro Tips for writing great scholarship applications:

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1. Have someone else read your writing before you submit.

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This one is *extremely* important. You simply can't catch every error. Get help from someone you trust – a favorite teacher, a friend who's a whiz with writing, a parent, or your guidance counselor. If there's no one around you who can offer this help, WYCF can offer some support. Please email scholarship staff for more information.

3. Answer the questions.

This seems so obvious...but you'd be surprised how many applicants don't do this. Read the question carefully, and answer it fully. Answer everything asked of you, without leaving anything out. And (...this one is important), the more detail you can provide the better. **An answer that is short and lacking detail leaves readers with questions.** A too-short answer also looks lazy.

4. Be formal.

This is writing for a committee of professionals, not a caption on SnapChat. Avoid contractions (“don’t,” “wasn’t”) and slang. Watch out for incomplete sentences. Again, if you’re unsure about this and you’re struggling to find someone who can help you, you’re welcome to email WYCF scholarship staff.

5. But also...show your passion and tell your story.

The committee wants to get to know you as an individual, and wants to support students who *truly care* about their studies and success. “Correct,” formal writing is important...but making a strong case for why you need and deserve support is much more so.

Remember, it's almost always the essays that set the winners apart, so make yours count.

6. Don't be afraid of short sentences.

In fact, learn to love them. Short sentences are your friend. Run-on sentences annoy readers and make them lose interest. More importantly, the longer the sentence, the more likely it is that your grammar will start falling apart.

7. Avoid a few common little errors...

These are a few small mistakes we all make. Double check for these:

Don't use apostrophes for plurals (**I have two brother's** is wrong. It should just be **brothers**).

Do use apostrophes for possessives (**My teachers advice...** is wrong. It should be **teacher's**).

Don't confuse it's and its (**It's** is only a contraction of **it is**...never use **it's** for possessive).

Don't write incomplete sentences.

If you start a new paragraph, make sure there is a full line of emptiness between it and the previous paragraph. Bad formatting will drive your committee nuts.

Don't confuse **they're**, **their**, and **there**.

8. Think like your reader.

Get the reader's attention. Pay attention to good flow. Don't let silly errors get in the way of the reader enjoying your writing. (And we do mean "enjoy" here...committee members truly love learning about students like you! Don't get in their way by forcing them to read disorganized, error-riddled writing).

9. Outline longer answers before writing the full answer...

...or at least think through how you're going to organize your writing. Wandering, aimless writing will annoy your reader. Well organized writing shows that you care about detail, and that you can think through a topic well.

10. Read your writing out loud.

If you're not used to doing this, it can feel a little strange...but it's worth it. Reading your writing out loud is an extremely useful way of catching errors. More importantly, it helps you notice where the writing doesn't flow as well, where it's boring, where it doesn't hold together well, etc. etc. etc....