

Resource Guide: The Only 3 Steps You Need to Write a Scholarship-Winning Essay QUICKLY

Writing a scholarship essay, or any essay for that matter, is never fun. Sometimes I would sit in front of an open, empty Microsoft Word document for an hour and still have absolutely no idea what to write.

Perhaps you can relate?

Even when I did start writing, my essay was boring, not creative and certainly not scholarship-winning.

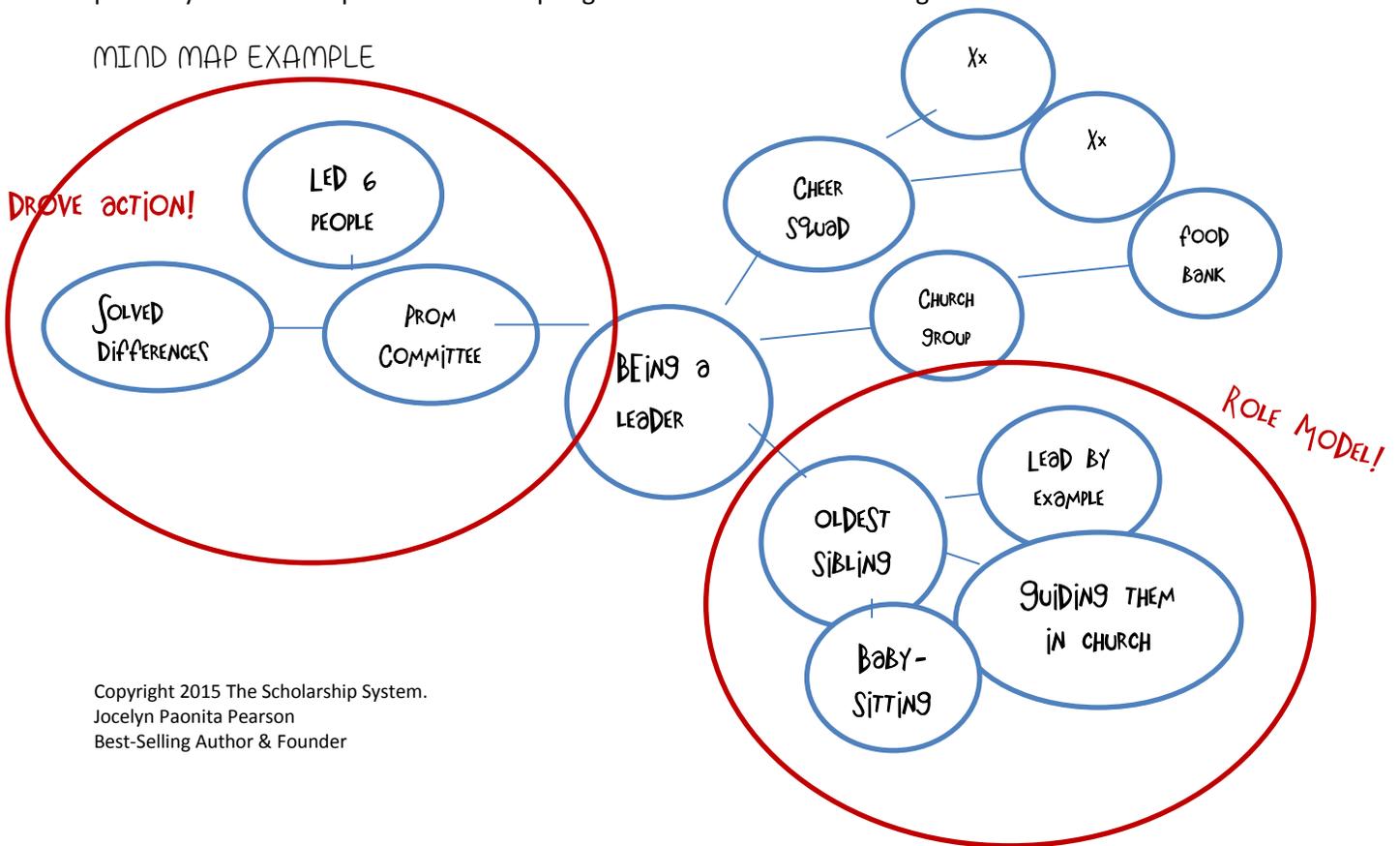
With hundreds of hours of practice, I finally got to the point where I was winning scholarships for college. Then, over my four years in college, I slowly tweaked my strategy, finding the perfect way to write an essay QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY so that I could reuse them yet continuing winning scholarship money.

SEE BELOW FOR MY 3 STEP PROCESS ON HOW TO WRITE AN AWARD-WINNING ESSAY.

Step 1: Mind-map your essay

The #1 problem with sitting in front of a Word document and starting to write that way is that you are writing linearly. This stifles creativity, leading to boring essays that put judges to sleep (or get thrown right into the trash). Instead, try writing the topic in the center of a sheet of paper and circle it like you see below. Then, keep writing all over the page with more and more ideas that stem from it. You will probably see a few topics that can lump together like with 'Oldest sibling' and 'Prom committee'.

MIND MAP EXAMPLE



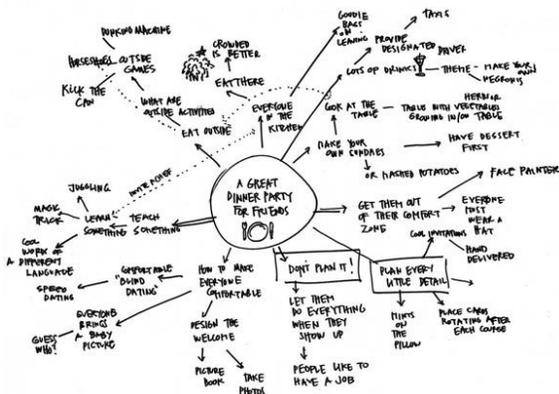
The key is to simply write down as many ideas as possible. You don't have to use them in the essay. Just get them out there. Perhaps you will think of something that never even came to mind before but could be the best part of an essay!

THIS METHOD PROMOTES CREATIVITY BECAUSE YOU AREN'T THINKING LINEARLY ANYMORE. YOUR BRAIN IS ACTUALLY BEING TOLD TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX BECAUSE OF THE WAY YOU ARE BRAINSTORMING. IN SIMPLE TERMS, YOU WILL HAVE A STRONGER, MORE COMPETITIVE ESSAY THAT GRABS THE JUDGES' ATTENTION!

As you are writing down your ideas, try to build off them. In the first example, 'prom committee' was an example where the student felt like they showed leadership. Do not stop there. Try to build off it by asking yourself these questions:

- HOW? (ex. How did I show leadership while on the prom committee?)
- WHY? (ex. Why did I decide to show leadership?)
- WHAT WAS MY GREATEST CHALLENGE WITH THIS?

Write your answers in bubbles as well. In the example, when asked HOW the student showed leadership, the student wrote "Solved differences" in a circle and connected it. Below is what your page should look like when you are done (you can choose to circle what you write, put boxes around it, draw dotted lines if you realize two ideas connect, etc. – this isn't formal which is the idea so do what works for you!)



Step 2: Outline Your Mind Map

Once you have a full sheet of random thoughts like the image above, try to form an outline from them. Group the words or phrases into three main ideas and write this down as your outline. You probably won't use everything you wrote down so pick the best three that you've developed the most. This will make your essay ten times easier than choosing one you didn't really have much written on.

***IMPORTANT: When writing an essay, you should start off with an interesting story or one-liner to catch the judges' attention, then have 3 main points (2 at the minimum) with explanations behind them and finish with a closing paragraph or line that summarizes your points with the essay question.

Regardless of word or character limit, this structure should always be implemented when possible unless they blatantly ask for something else (rare).

YOUR OUTLINE SHOULD LOOK SIMILAR TO THIS:

1. Idea, point or argument 1
 - a. Supporting argument
 - b. Supporting argument
 - c. Supporting argument
2. Idea, point or argument 2
 - a. Supporting argument
 - b. Supporting argument
 - c. Supporting argument
3. Idea, point or argument 3
 - a. Supporting argument
 - b. Supporting argument

- 
1. BEING AN OLDEST SIBLING
 - a. RESPONSIBLE FROM 4-7 FOR MY SISTERS
 - b. LED BY EXAMPLE WITH CHORES AND SAVING ALLOWANCE
 - c. HELPED THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE SERMONS IN CHURCH
 2. PROM COMMITTEE
 - a. HELPED SETTLE DIFFERENCES AMONG OTHER 6 MEMBERS
 - b. CAME UP WITH ACTION PLAN FOR DECORATIONS GROUP
 - c. RESULTED IN A BEAUTIFUL PROM, ON TIME AND BUDGET
 3. CHEER SQUAD
 - a. SUPPORTING ARGUMENT
 - b. SUPPORTING ARGUMENT

Step 3: Write the Essay!

After you complete a quick outline, you are ready to start writing. It is amazing how quickly you can write a phenomenal essay using this method because you basically just wrote your essay with the outline. Now, you just have to add transitions and put it into full sentences.

The first sentence/paragraph needs to be an interesting, attention-grabbing opening.

*** IMPORTANT: DO NOT, I REPEAT, DO NOT START YOUR ESSAY BY REPHRASING THE ESSAY TOPIC OR QUESTION.

For example, if the essay topic was “Describe a time you displayed leadership skills”, you should NOT start your essay with “A time I displayed leadership skills was”. This is the most BORING, opposite of eye-catching beginning possible and I guarantee you 80% of applicants will start that way. This means YOU SHOULDN’T if you want to stand out!

A better way to start your essay is with a quick story. Here is an example but please note this is completely made up just for the sake of showing you a solid example:

“AS PART OF A LARGE FAMILY, STANDING OUT WAS NOT ALWAYS EASY. WITH ALL THE CRAZINESS AND CHAOS OF 5 KIDS AND A DOG, I HAD TO FIND A WAY TO STAND OUT WHEN IN SCHOOL. JUMPING INTO COMMITTEES AND VOLUNTEERING, I QUICKLY RECEIVED THE ATTENTION I SOUGHT OUT BUT WHAT I DIDN’T REALIZE WAS THAT THIS LARGE, CRAZY FAMILY OF MINE BENEFITED ME IN MORE WAYS THAN MAKING ME GET INVOLVED. THERE ARE 3 MAIN EXPERIENCES IN WHICH I HAVE EXEMPLIFIED LEADERSHIP SKILLS.

FIRST IS AS AN OLDER SIBLING, SECOND IS THROUGH MY PROM COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT AND THIRD IS.....”

I don't know about you but I would be curious where this student is going when she starts talking about her crazy family. Even better than it being an interesting beginning, it tied in perfectly to the essay.

Sometimes you won't be able to write an entire opening paragraph (if the word limit is low) but you should still always start off with an interesting sentence, phrase, quote or something similar to catch the judges' attention.

The next part is the body of the essay. This part is the easiest because you already wrote it with your outline. Simply take your outline and turn it into paragraphs. Let's take the first part of the outline:

1. BEING AN OLDEST SIBLING
 - a. RESPONSIBLE FROM 4-7 FOR MY SISTERS
 - b. LED BY EXAMPLE WITH CHORES AND SAVING ALLOWANCE
 - c. HELPED THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE SERMONS IN CHURCH

“BEING AN OLDER SIBLING HAS MADE ME DISPLAY LEADERSHIP SKILLS EVERY DAY. BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR MY SIBLINGS FROM 4 TO 7 PM WHILE MY PARENTS ARE STILL AT WORK, I TRY TO BE THE BEST ROLE MODEL POSSIBLE WHICH IS A VERY IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP QUALITY. I DO SO BY HELPING WITH CHORES, SAVING MY ALLOWANCE AND EVEN GUIDING THEM WHEN WE GO TO CHURCH, SHOWING THEM HOW TO PAY ATTENTION AND HELPING THEM UNDERSTAND THE WEEK'S MESSAGE. “

That literally just took me less than 5 minutes to write because all I did was connect the bullet points listed as well as the note jotted down in the mind map where it said “role model!”

Do this for each of your points. Depending on how long the essay limit is, you may only be able to use 2 arguments or you might only be able to write one sentence for each point.

REMEMBER: REGARDLESS OF THE LENGTH OF THE ESSAY, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS FOLLOW THE FORMAT OF:

OPENING PARAGRAPH/SENTENCE

2-3 MAIN POINTS

CLOSING PARAGRAPH/SENTENCE

So this brings us to the closing paragraph/sentence which can also take you just a few minutes (though you always want to make sure to end strong). What you do here if you did the outline correctly and you used solid arguments in the body of the essay is simply restate your reasoning. This is where it is okay to use the essay topic (if anything, it helps them see that you were indeed answering the question).

“IN CONCLUSION, I HAVE DISPLAYED LEADERSHIP SKILLS THROUGH THREE MAJOR INVOLVEMENTS: TAKING CARE OF MY SIBLINGS, LEADING A PROM COMMITTEE AND PARTICIPATING IN THE CHEER SQUAD. THESE HELPED ME BUILD MY SKILLS AS A ROLE MODEL, AS SOMEONE WHO DRIVES ACTION AND AS SOMEONE WHO BENEFIT OF POINT 3, ALL SKILLS THAT WILL HELP ME TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE.”

AND there you have it! Essay is written.

Did I really use this method?

Yes! I actually used this method to write by book, [The Scholarship System](#), which has now turned into a course called [Scholarship School](#)! When using it, I was able to write 1,000 words in less than an hour! This method worked for me. I promise it can work for you!

A few basic essay tips to remember:

Though writing your essay is the hardest part, don't forget to go through the basic steps for submitting essays. THESE WILL INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING EXPONENTIALLY!

1. Always reread the essay requirements and double check that you are meeting them. If the essay says “minimum 250 words”, make sure you write more than 250 words or else your application can be thrown out! If there is a maximum, same rule applies. Always follow directions.
2. Get someone else to review it once you're done: a professor, parent, teacher, counselor, etc. When you are looking at the same essay for a while, it's easy to overlook things. 9 times out of 10, they will catch something you didn't. (Perhaps I missed something in this resource guide – it happens. No judgement, just try to reduce the chances by asking someone to check!)
3. Make sure to submit everything in a clean, organized format.
 - If submitting online, try to upload your essay as a pdf so that formatting doesn't change.
 - If you have to paste it, make sure you add in spaces between paragraphs if they were deleted in the pasting process.
 - If submitting paper (though I only graduated a couple years ago, I actually did mostly paper applications in the 'old days' ☺), make sure to keep it nice and neat and in a logical order with the rest of your paperwork.

If you want more information on The Scholarship System or the scholarship process, here are a few options:

- Hardcopy or eBook (with free audio version): [The Scholarship System on Amazon](#)
- Sign up for Scholarship School, a 6-week course to make winning scholarships faster and easier: [Scholarship School Signup](#)
- Join us on social media for scholarship deadlines, tips & tricks and much more!

