

Writing an Effective Personal Profile

Scholarship applications, personal profiles and supplemental information (when required) are reviewed by a scholarship committee comprised of UA faculty and/or staff. Depending on how many scholarships each applicant is eligible for, many applications are reviewed by multiple committees. The committees' task is to match the scholarship program with a scholar. Direct the readers. Why are you the exemplary choice to receive a scholarship?

Committees will evaluate the following: leadership, extracurricular involvement, presentation (grammar, punctuation, etc), your educational and career goals and plans, and any other information you feel the committee should know about you or your application. Try to touch upon each of those criterions in your personal profile and go into as much detail as you can within the 3000 character (approximately 500 word) limit. It is recommended that you compose your profile in a word processing program such as Microsoft Word, and then copy and paste into the box provided.

Effective profiles successfully do the following:

Give insight about who you are. They show us who you are, how you think, how you decide to act (or not act) upon something, how you approach a problem or dilemma, how you interact with your environment.

Avoid being melancholy! You do have something interesting to write about. Don't write a resume (unless asked for); let us know what makes you stand out amongst the other applicants. Your personal profile *is* read by committee members making scholarship recommendations so take the time to put your best foot forward.

Profile Brainstorms:

- Describe activities you are involved in that relate to your educational plan or your future career
- Describe a scholastic achievement you have made, and why it is important to you
- Describe contributions you have made to your community and/or campus and explain how those experiences have contributed to your personal growth
- Pick an experience from your own life and explain how it has influenced your development
- Where do you see yourself 10 years from now

You may choose a topic that 200 other students write about (which is fine). But how you write about your topic can distinguish your essay from the pack.

- Write logically where the reader can follow your train of thought. Make sure your sentences relate to each other. Use transitions when a change takes place in your story or you are making a new point.
- Avoid redundant sentences and phrases.

- Use your own voice; you don't need to impress by using esoteric jargon or vocabulary. Readers detect pretension when reading one mile-size multisyllabic word after another, which makes the writing less compelling. However, it is a good idea to consult a dictionary and thesaurus to find the right words that convey your ideas with precision. Good diction strengthens essays.
- Write what you know. If you are trying to impress the committee by writing on a complicated subject matter but you are not passionate nor know little about it, the reader can pick up on this and your essay may seem disingenuous.
- Use appropriate language. Keep in mind your audience – scholarship committee members who must choose the right scholar for the scholarship program.
- Generic statements don't reveal why you are unique. Use detailed, vivid descriptions to produce distinct mental images of your story. Here are some examples to illustrate this point:

This opening sentence is more specific, but it needs further elaboration to learn how the writer motivated and encouraged team members.

Generic statement:

“Being chosen as captain of the soccer team made me more mature.”

An alternative description:

What I learned from being the captain of the soccer team was how to motivate and encourage others effectively when situations seemed hopeless.

Here's another example of two descriptions:

Generic Statement:

My mom is the most influential person in my life. She is supportive in everything I do and she is a great role model. I try to emulate her and follow her teachings in everything I pursue.

How is this mom supportive? How is she a great role model? Is there a specific example of her mother's qualities? Show vs. tell.

Here's an alternative description:

I want to raise my children like my mother did.

My mom never used a guilt trip to teach me wrong from right. When I told her in 4th grade, “I didn't need to practice “Silent Night” for my organ playing debut at Midnight Mass she merely asked, “Have you thought this idea through?” I thought it was a brilliant plan to keep me “fresh”, so I said, “yes,” without hesitation. My nerves got the best of me that night, and I started on the wrong note, stumbling through the finger patterns of the song, and completely played the piece off key. I couldn't help but see teens in the audience shaking in their seats,

trying to stifle their laughs. After I played the final note, I ran/walked to sit next to my mom, who smiled at me and enfolded me in a huge pew hug. Afterwards, I was despondent; yet, my mother kept beaming with pride that I completed the full song in front of 300 people. She never let on if she was embarrassed or if she was embarrassed for me. She didn't need to remind me that practice would have made the experience less harrowing.

But she knew how to use the power of shame.

When I came out of our bathroom one morning, my raven hair bleached to white and my brown pupils sheered over by violet contacts, my mom's face went pale and immediately flushed to maroon. She paced between our narrow hall way five times, and simply asked, "Why have you erased your grandmother's features from you? Are you so ashamed of your heritage?" I felt the disappointment of generations with her words and her curt delivery stunned me. I then cried and couldn't believe what I had done to myself. Before I could run back into the bathroom to correct my appearance, she latched onto the edge of my shirt and forced me downstairs where a family reunion was gathering to celebrate my grandmother's 75th birthday. My new look attracted questioning stares and joke fodder from my family. With each embarrassing explanation and glances of shame, my mother made me accountable for my actions and taught me the impact of my decision and behavior that day. As in this episode, my mom passed down effective life-learning teaching methods that I hope I can emulate with equal patience and wisdom for my own children.

Works Consulted:

- College Board "College Essay Writing Tips: Write an Effective Application Essay" <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/essay-skills/9406.html>
- Norlin Scholars Program "Tips for Writing Scholarship Essays and Getting Strong Letters of Recommendation" <http://www.colorado.edu/norlinscholars/apply.htm>