

CREATING A WINNING APPLICATION

The following contains some valuable tips from experienced scholarship chairs and judges with many years of experience in reviewing aviation scholarship applications:

APPLICATION

- Typed is preferred and looks most professional. It also scores points for presentation and neatness.
- If doing the app by hand as typing is just not possible, write legibly and don't scratch anything out. (Yes, applicants have done that!) Doing so tells the judges you are sloppy and can't be bothered to do things correctly. Don't write past the end of the line, under the line or onto the margin because you have run out of space. Ever. Start over.
- Fill in all blanks or mark with N/A (except empty boxes on flight time grids)
- If the application asks for a 'Current Medical Certificate/Class' this is not a yes or no question. Enter the date it was issued.
- If a membership date is required then use the actual date you joined, not "Continuous through..." "March 2018" or "Yes"
- Submit everything on time. This seems ridiculous to mention but people waiting until the last day often miss the deadline.
- Checking for omissions, spelling mistakes, and missing info seems basic but is worth repeating. Applications have been submitted with incomplete names and addresses! Proofread everything, then have a few friends proofread it as well.

ESSAY TOPICS, GRAMMAR, AND CREATIVE WRITING

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.” ~ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Simply not having the funds and a love of aviation (no matter how great) will not make you a winner.

You must make a statement of financial need for completion of your goal and demonstrate that you are committed to achieving it by having a plan in place to obtain it. Discuss your goal, the steps left to achieve it (take the written, x hours solo, x hours cross-country etc.), the cost of training per hour where you fly, hours remaining to meet the goal, your current limiting financial obligations, your funding options, and your timeline to achieve it without a scholarship. Show that you clearly understand what is required to reach your goal and that you have some sort of plan to fund it without assistance (take out a loan, get another job, find a roommate etc.). For financial need based awards this should be an essential part of your essay. If your ability to achieve your goal is truly nil without free money, your ranking will be affected as the award does not cover the cost of the entire certificate. Many who could have scored higher did not because they left too many unanswered questions or did not detail how they will fund the balance of their training on their own and complete their training. Be clear, concise and overly informative - especially about funding your goal and budget plans. Regardless of your income, break down the dollar amounts you can budget from it, your expected total cost, and the amount you have currently saved or allotted for your training.

Many applicants think the lower their income, the better their chances or the more

deserving they are of a scholarship. That is true for a "bursary" (a financial award granted on the basis of financial need) while a "scholarship", by definition, is based on merit even though many scholarships also take into account financial need. A scholarship is the helping-hand you need to achieve your goals sooner with less financial burden. It is money invested in you, with hope for return on that investment: a successfully trained pilot and, for Ninety-Nines awards, an active 99 who supports her sister aviatrixes and her chapter. Don't look like an iffy investment!

Don't start your essay with "Hello/Hi..." "Dear..." or "To whom it may concern". It is not an email or a letter. Avoid "My name is...I am X years old...I live in....I attend..." in your essay. Doing so is redundant as those facts are already stated on the applicant information sheet. The same is true for starting each sentence with "I have, I will, I am, I plan, I, I..." . Reading an essay where most of the sentences start with "I" is redundant, not very engaging to read, and indicative of poor writing skills. Restate the information so your writing flows and engages the judges. Use exclamation points sparingly. If many of the sentences end with an exclamation point, that does not convey excitement but rather a lack of writing skill. Use a program or browser add-on like [Grammarly](#) to help you go beyond fixing spelling mistakes and improve your writing. Don't add in extraneous filler about your extracurricular activities and volunteering that are not aviation related, your family life in detail (unless it directly affects your flight training or funding ability), all your hobbies or writing about your prize winning whatchamacallit at the county fair. Aviation scholarships aren't based on the "well-rounded" applicant, so use your one page words wisely. Meandering, unfocused essays with irrelevant fluff won't score points with the judges. Impress the judges with an essay that will paint you as a pilot who is continually striving to achieve goals despite financial limitations and *has a flight plan* to eventually get to their destination. Be the good investment the benefactors are looking for.

The most polished applicants use the standard five paragraph essay format from H.S. English composition. The thesis should be your aviation goal and the paragraph topics detail what you have done and how you are working towards it. Your essay should have paragraph breaks. This would seem obvious if you are writing an essay but apparently it is not to a few applicants. The essay should flow like a story with a beginning, middle and an end. When embedding your text into a PDF application form box, do not use a tiny font for your essay, leaving space at the bottom of the box. Your essay should fill the entire one page space available in 12 point font. If it doesn't it is lacking details and you need to add more content to it. Attention to detail is sometimes what sets two very closely ranked applicants apart. Use spell check and Grammarly to improve your writing. This cannot be said enough. For Ninety-Nines awards, "99s" is the correct form for the organization using numerals and there is no apostrophe. (Using "99's" is incorrect.)

Red flags - Do you have a lot of hours with little progress in your training? Have little obvious training progress over a long period? Why are you still doing the same lesson over and over again? Address it! Don't leave the judges wondering about your situation, tackle it head on. How you are handling that adversity could pump up your application. Write about your training progress or lack thereof. You have 80 hours and still haven't soloed, why not? Undoubtedly, there are factors affecting your training so talk about them. If you have had breaks in training causing you to start over, why and how are you staying in the game when not actively flying? You may have stopped and started training several times in the past, what is different this time aside from lack of funding that you will reach your goal? During your break were you able to set aside any funds for

future training? These questions will be on the judges' minds, so it behooves you to answer them in your essay.

Applied before and just can't seem to win? It is time to rework that application and essay! For essay based awards, if you submitted a complete, typed application with meticulous document attachments on time and can never seem to win, you are not painting the kind of picture about yourself that puts you above the other applicants. You need to be better for the win. If you cannot write your story well, get help. Your essay is a sales pitch. Get as much input as you can from those who know you well so that you can create an effective one. Above all, DO NOT simply tweak some numbers and recycle your previous essay! (The judges often recall past applicants.) If your essay didn't win the first time, it likely won't win later for the same reasons. Every detail counts when splitting hairs between two very close applicants. Consider that if you take four hours to do your app and win \$2,000, you just got paid \$500/hr to do the paperwork. Put forth the effort to make it perfect!

DOCUMENTATION AND ATTACHMENTS

- Only include the requested documents and *do not attach extras*. You are not following instructions if you do. Making the judges work harder to sift through your application to find the required documents among those that are not will not impress and likely cause your application to be downgraded.
- Do not submit more than the required letter(s) of recommendation.
- Be sure all document and certificate copies are legible and oriented correctly. Ideally, properly oriented photos that are clear and cropped appropriately for colorizing your documents. Attach logbook or document images with text oriented to match the text in the document. Reading electronic documents that are oriented vertically when they should be horizontal is less than ideal for the judges. Take the time to make it right. There are plenty of free photo editing apps out there, so use one to rotate your images. MS Paint and [PhotoScape](#) are free programs for turning, cropping and copy/pasting front/back images into one .jpg. Most smartphones can even crop and rotate images. Put in the effort to make your app as polished as possible. Smartphone images can be uploaded to [Google Docs](#) and inserted, rotated and sized in a document you can then download as a PDF or Word file for free.
- Put your airman or student certificate and medical images on a single page. Do not use a single page for each image. This causes your application packet to be larger than necessary when your goal is to make it concise, tidy and well presented.
- One "logbook page" is BOTH the left and right pages (all columns) in the logbook.
- Total the columns in your logbook pages so your all times are easily determined at the bottom of each page, even if the page is an incomplete one. Total times and the amount forwarded in each column should NEVER be blank on images you submit. Not doing this is a huge pet peeve with judges. Use a pencil to write in totals on incomplete pages.
- The year should be noted on each page in your logbook.
- Need a way to get your PDFs arranged and merged into one document? The browser based app [PDF Mergy](#) or online utility www.iLovePDF.com will allow you to edit, sort or merge to put all your PDFs into one document and are free.

Best of luck on your next application!