

# **Scholarships & Essays**

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**What is important?**

**Transcripts**

**Letters of Recommendation**

**Essays**

# Transcripts

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- A summary of your high school course of study. The following items are included:
  - Name and Address
  - Every class taken
  - Every grade received
  - Every credit earned
  - Grade Point Average (Term and Cumulative)
  - ACT Scores



# Letters of Recommendation

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- A letter written by someone (other than a relative) who knows you well and who will be able to write knowledgeably about your positive characteristics.
  - A letter of recommendation will contain stories and examples which support their statements.
  - A letter of recommendation is NOT a repetition of your resume.
  - The recommender's letter can be used several times. You DO NOT need to find more than 2 or 3 people.
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# Essays

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- Essays are written responses which specifically and originally answer questions posed by college admissions or scholarship agencies/organizations.



# What items make up the total application packet?

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- Application
  - Transcript
  - Resume
  - Letters of Recommendation
    - Essays
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# How important is each item?

- Application
- Transcript
- Resume
- Letters of Recommendation
- Essays

Winner's Circle!



# Letters of Recommendation and References

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- ❑ **What is the difference between a letter of recommendation and a reference?**
  - ❑ **When an application asks for references, you simply list individuals along with their addresses and phone numbers. Those individuals may be contacted to answer questions about you. (Ask permission before using a person!)**
  - ❑ **When an application asks for letters of recommendation, you must request individuals to write letters for you.**
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## Recommendation/Reference Guidelines

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- 1. Ask an individual if you may use them as a reference. Never list anyone without his/her permission.**
- 2. When seeking a recommendation, ask someone who knows you well and who can write a first-rate recommendation.**
- 3. Ask plenty of time ahead (one week absolute minimum, preferably two weeks). Never interrupt a teacher while he/she is teaching!**



## Recommendation/Reference Guidelines (Continued)



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- 4. Always fill out the Letter of Recommendation Request Form to hand to the individual you are asking to write a letter. This form will let him/her know the following information:**
- what the recommendation is for**
  - to whom the letter should be addressed**
  - South Sioux City Athletic Booster Club  
Scholarship Selection Committee**
  - to whom the letter should be given (counselor or  
Mrs. Aitken)**
  - what the selection criteria is (if applicable)**
  - when it is due (DO NOT USE THE APPLICATION  
DEADLINE AS YOUR DEADLINE)**
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## Recommendation/Reference Guidelines (Continued)

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- 5. If you anticipate needing several recommendations from an individual, inform him/her of this so he/she can save your letter. Again, you do not need to ask new people each time you need a recommendation.**
  - 6. Follow up! Everyone is busy, and forgets things. So don't be shy about giving a friendly, gentle reminder to the people who are writing letters.**
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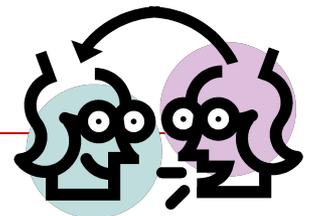
## Recommendation/Reference Guidelines (Continued)

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- 7. It is imperative that you take the time to thank your recommender. A written thank you is best.**



- 8. Remember to make a face-to-face request, give ample time to write the letter, give lots of concrete information, and be organized!**



**Which one of the next two paragraphs is better for a letter of recommendation?**

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**Mary is very involved in activities both in and out of school. She participates in volleyball and track. She is a member of Student Council and is vice president of her class. She also is a member of Band, Jazz Band, and Pep Band. Outside activities include membership in her church youth group, volunteering her time at a local daycare center, and working part-time at Walgreens.**

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- **A most vivid picture comes to my mind when asked to write about Leigh. Imagine a group of young people nervously campaigning for student government in a gymnasium. Slowly, a six-foot ladder is rolled out; Leigh (all five feet of her) ascends the ladder rung by rung to the delight of her audience and proceeds to deliver her winning speech. This moment in Leigh's high school career is so indicative of her marvelous sense of humor and her willingness to take risks.**



# Guidelines For Writing Essays

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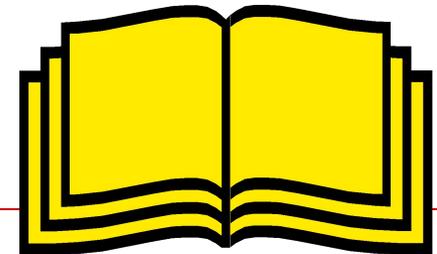
- ❑ **The key to writing a successful essay is putting a great deal of effort into the writing. You must work hard and long to refine your writing skills.**
- ❑ **Get organized so you know when essays are due. PLAN AHEAD!**
- ❑ **When writing, keep your reader in mind. Write an engaging, thoughtful essay that keeps the reader's attention and differentiates you from the others. (WOW factor!)**
- ❑ **Make your point quickly; be brief and meaningful. Remember your readers are busy, sifting through piles of paperwork.**



# Guidelines For Writing Essays (Continued)

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- ❑ **Go for depth, not breadth. Writing about many factors is less helpful or engaging than a more focused look at one or two things you consider most important.**
- ❑ **Specifics beat generalities every time. If you are writing about one quality of yours and you can't think of even one event to illustrate that quality, then don't even write about that item.**
- ❑ **Assume the reader won't turn the page. Catch the reader's eye and mind in the first paragraph.**



# Guidelines For Writing Essays (Continued)

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- ❑ **Be creative. Keep in mind that you are competing. You need to be unique; definitely make yourself stand out.**
- ❑ **Be honest about who you are and who you are not. Lying will get you nowhere.**
- ❑ **Use a desirable tone:**
  - Friendliness – don't be a snob.**
  - Confidence – feel good about yourself but don't paint a perfect picture.**
  - Enthusiasm – It's contagious.**
  - Respect for authority.**



# Guidelines For Writing Essays (Continued)

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- ❑ **Don't beg!**
  - ❑ **Don't be antagonistic.**
  - ❑ **Don't whine.**
  - ❑ **Don't be too forceful, funny, sad, cute, or silly.**
  - ❑ **Consider and prepare for the space and number of words allowed. Don't ramble or be redundant.**
  - ❑ **Helpful grammar hints:**
    - Guide your reader from point to point.**
    - Use strong transitions.**
    - Use concrete examples.**
    - Vary sentence structure**
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## **Guidelines For Writing Essays (Continued)**

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**Give your essay to someone else to read and ask him/her this simple question, "Could anyone else besides me have written this?"**

**If he/she says, "Yes," then rip it up and start over because you have not written a winning essay. Remember: uniqueness and originality are the keys that will open the winning doors.**



**Which of the following four beginning paragraphs for the question, “Why are you making education your career choice?” will most want you to continue reading?**

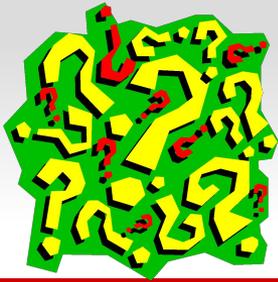
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- The reason why I want to make education my career choice is because I feel I have the need to teach other kids what my teachers have taught me. Last year, I would have never thought I would be going to college to major in education. Now, teaching is what I want my future career to be.**
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- There are several reasons why I would like to attend college. To be able to attend a university would be one of the best opportunities that have been offered to me. Being given the chance to excel past high school would give me the chance to pursue my lifelong dreams and goals.**
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- **My siblings and I attended Saint Michael's Parish School; however, by the end of my brother's kindergarten year, it was discovered that he was learning disabled. My family decided to transfer all of us to the public school system where more help was available. Once enrolled, we were all amazed to see the amazing progress he made with the help of wonderful teachers. I saw the huge change that teachers made in his life, and I decided my freshman year of high school that I would like to become a teacher.**
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- **“Mom! I’m sick again, I threw up in the toilet!” As a second grader I began to master the trick of sticking my finger down my throat, making it a priority that something would come up so I wouldn’t have to face my awful teacher. Now as I sit and think about my second grade year, who would have thought that good really can come from the bad? From my dreadful experience as a second grader, I have found my passion in life; I want to become a teacher.**
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# How important is each item?

- Application
- Transcript
- Resume
- Letters of Recommendation
- Essays



Winner's Circle!



# Remember!

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- If your application, resume, and transcript get you into the final selection, your letters of recommendation and essays must have the **WOW** factor!



**WOW!**  
The winning key!

