

The Academic Essay: Problem-Solution

Overview: Show the reader that you are both incredibly knowledgeable about the given topic, and an apt problem-solver with the needs of the community in mind.

Mode: Informing, Teaching

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Problem: Identify the problem and give specific and relevant examples of how this **problem** negatively affects people in the given community (the community that scholarship sponsors either ask you about, or care about based on their interests). If possible, specifically comment on how this **problem** exposes humanity's **flaws** and makes them worse, or places difficult **obstacles** in front of progress, safety, social welfare, or justice.

Goal: In a Problem-Solution essay, your **goal** should be to teach the reader how to eliminate, or reduce the effects of, the **problem**. The vehicle for your **goal** is your solution. To teach the process of implementing your solution, you will need specific tangible steps that people can take put it into action. Notice the relationship here between **goal** and **sacrifice**, because these steps will likely require individuals to make considerable **sacrifices** for the solution to work.

Choice: In a Problem-Solution essay, the steps to your solution are the **choices** that individuals and other societal groups will have to make. Your most important job is to explain the **relationship** between these choices and the practical goals of your solution – in other words, how they will end or better the situation caused by the **problem**.

Sacrifice: In order to solve the **problem**, society and its individual members will have to make specific, tangible **sacrifices**. Detail these sacrifices in Paragraph #2 (Complication), and expand on them in your elaboration of the solution in Paragraph #3 (Climax).

Growth: The story of the Problem-Solution essay is the **growth** of society, which requires individuals to make **sacrificial choices** for the good of a common **goal**. In your final paragraph (Conclusion), focus on the benefits of this **growth** and convey a sense of optimism. Do not end with “doom and gloom.” If you end with hope, it will give your readers a positive sensation that will be associated with you and your proposed solution!

Academic Essay Vocabulary: Every topic involves people who care about it. For the purpose of these placemats, planning sheets, and rubrics, those individuals will be called “users.” Voters are “users,” as are buyers, drivers, parents, students – anyone directly affected by or involved in the topic given by the scholarship essay prompt.

