

Prompt Requirements

Every scholarship sponsor is different. And since there are no universal rules governing scholarships, a sponsor can implement whatever requirements it wants. It's your job to read them, understand them, and make sure that every aspect of your application and essay(s) meets them perfectly. Here are some various requirements, or requirement-related issues, that could catch you off-guard:

Eligibility

Almost every scholarship asks you to meet certain "eligibility" requirements. Read these carefully to determine if you are, indeed eligible. If you have any questions about your eligibility, **call or email the sponsor**. Don't be shy or embarrassed and miss out on potential money! Here are common eligibility requirements:

- A GPA of X.0 or higher
- Certain SAT/ACT test score or higher
- Year in school – usually a graduating senior, unless offered to current college students
- # of semesters/years in a certain sport (sometimes at a particular level, like varsity)
- # of semesters/years in a club (sometimes in a particular role, such as "president")
- # of credit hours in an area of study
- Work or service experience, also called "community involvement"
- Membership or family membership in an organization, such as a union or masons
- Intention to attend accredited post-secondary institution (some are limited to a specific university/college)
- First-generation student (aimed to help "first" members of families attend college)
- Financial need

Essay Prompt

Prompt requirements must be followed, especially word counts. **Do not ignore them.** As a former judge in several writing contests, I loved submissions that ignored word counts – I could instantly disqualify them.

- **Word counts:** Usually 250, 300, or 500 words. Some essays require you to note the word count on the page – type this in the designated place as required, or upper right-hand corner if not given a place.
- **Language requirements:** Usually in English (in USA), though some allow for other languages.
- **Topics:** Some prompts are broadly stated, asking you to include topics such as "financial need," "personal or family adversity," "extracurricular involvement," "volunteer service," and/or "career objectives and goals." For open-ended prompts choose either the [Obstacle](#) or [Future](#) essay approach to make sure each required topic appears prominently in the response.
- **Title page:** If required, follow the given guidelines closely. If no guidelines are posted, provide your name, address, email address, school name, the title of your essay, and the word count, just to be sure.
- **Bibliography / Works Cited:** For responses utilizing research and evidence, make sure you include a works cited page or bibliography. Usually this does not count against your word count, but it's best to double-check the prompt and be sure. Don't be afraid to contact the sponsor for a definite answer.

There are many other unique requirements a sponsor could choose to enforce. Remember, it is entirely within a sponsor's right to make the process rigorous, precise, and challenging. Don't let these hurdles discourage you! If anything, enjoy the journey and get your family and friends to help you. Use the [Scholarship Application Checklist](#) to help you organize these numerous requirements. You'll learn more about this resource on Day 10.

