

## ANSWERING ESSAY QUESTIONS

Every Joliet Junior College Foundation scholarship application requires an essay in the form of answers to student **Essay** questions. These answers are one of the most important pieces of your application. This is where the Scholarship Selection Committee will get to know you; it will help them determine if you are the right person to receive the scholarship award.

Committees often look for:

- Interest in and knowledge of chosen field
- Motivation, enthusiasm
- Ability to express thoughts clearly
- Ability to face challenges and/or overcome obstacles
- Desire to achieve, dedication to goals
- Attention to detail and carefulness of work in completing the scholarship application

Begin by spending some time reflecting on your strengths. When you write down all of the great things you have accomplished, it will be much easier for you to create responses that convey your strong points to the selection committee. So *toot your own horn!*

- Make a list of all your accomplishments – note the three of which you are most proud
- Develop a list of your extracurricular and volunteer activities
- Think of a problem that you faced and write down how you were able to overcome it
- Put in writing your career goals, or your reason for wanting to attend college
- Pretend that you had to write a letter of recommendation for yourself and write down the three most important things you would say

Follow these steps:

1. Copy and paste (or type) into your browser <https://joliet.awardspring.com>
2. Use your brainstorming list to answer the three **Essay** questions on the application. The spaces to type your answers are under the Free Form Questions tab .
3. Your introduction will need a strong statement at the beginning in order to introduce the information that makes you a good candidate. Some possible beginnings:
  - ✓ An intriguing statement
  - ✓ A question
  - ✓ A relevant story or anecdote
  - ✓ A factual statement or summary of who-what-where-when-why
  - ✓ A comparison or contrast
  - ✓ A personal experience

4. Begin each answer with a clear topic sentence containing key words to help direct the reader:
  - ✓ My family includes...
  - ✓ I have always chosen challenging courses, and I have a very good academic record...
  - ✓ My career goal is to finish my Associate's degree at Joliet Junior College, then...
  - ✓ I have developed strong leadership skills and know how to interact with a wide variety of people through working several different jobs...
  - ✓ I was awarded a certificate of achievement for...
  - ✓ I have done a fair amount of community service including...
5. Stress the areas that make you a good candidate for a scholarship. For example, if financial need is a consideration for you, make a point of your financial need but not in a tacky way. Remember the questions are for your entire application, not for any one particular scholarship, so provide this information in general.
6. To answer the closing question, provide a concluding sentence that wraps up and summarizes key strengths. Some possible closing ideas include:
  - ✓ A restatement of the introduction and a summary of major points, stated in fresh terms
  - ✓ A story or quote that sums up the point of your answers
  - ✓ A statement of the importance of receiving a scholarship in achieving your educational and career goals
7. Choice of words is important. Achieve a balance between bragging and modesty. Avoid exaggerations and clichés but do not downplay your worth. You need to answer the questions in the number of words indicated, so choose your words carefully.
8. Remember ***you are not sending a text!*** Make sure your essay is well written. **Proofread** your essay. Consider grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Capitalize where necessary. Avoid wordiness. Be clear and concise. It is a good idea to have someone else double check your work. *Pay attention to the required word count* – the maximum length allowed for each response is included on the application.
9. Format your answers as an essay; do not submit a letter, provide bullet points or use incomplete sentences.

Writing assistance is available for registered JJC student from  
the Tutoring and Learning Center (C-2010) on Main Campus.

If you have questions, contact Patty Osborne, Scholarship Coordinator at (815) 280-2540.