Effective Essays for Scholarships
A Step-by-Step Guide
1. View full scholarship guidelines.

- Is there a specific question your essay must answer?
  - All scholarships for which you use the Study Abroad Office’s system to apply will use the same essay question.
2015-2016 Essay

Explain the journey that led you to study abroad and choosing your program. Consider one or more of the following points:

- How did you first hear about the idea of studying abroad?
- Did you know about study abroad before you came to MSU as a student? Did your choice to attend MSU have anything to do with study abroad?
- How many ways or times did you hear about the program before deciding to apply?
- Do you know MSU students who haven't heard about study abroad? If so, what are some ways we could reach these students?
- What can we do to make studying abroad easier for everyone who wants to go?

Essays should be well written and well organized without errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Please do not bullet point. We are looking for a coherent essay (in paragraphs) that pull from some or all of the points above.
2. Brainstorm

- Write down ideas for your essay.
- Remember to make your essay unique.
3. Write a draft of your essay.

- Use lots of detail.
  - Rather than stating: I would like to study abroad to experience new things.
  - Write: I look forward to using the German I have practiced in a classroom, touring a medieval castle, and using the U-bahn for transportation because I’ve never been on a subway.
Rather than stating: My greatest accomplishment is helping my mother recover from cancer.

Write: Until asked to write this essay, I don’t think I had really grasped how much pride I take in saying that not only did my mom have two liver transplants, cheat death, and is now cancer free and on the road to recovery, but I am a better and stronger person because of it.
Instead of “I want to take this course on Jane Austen because I love her novels.”

Try: “It is every girl’s dream to be like Eliza Bennett and marry Mr. Darcy, and to be presented with a chance to study the author’s works. Visiting locations closely associated with Austen is a dream that has almost come true.”
Organize effectively.

- If the scholarship asks for a response to more than one question, you may organize by question, use headers for sections, or organize in a way you deem effective.
- Grab your reader with an interesting opening.
- Make your main point clear in your first paragraph.
3. Revise your draft.

- Reread and revise your writing.
- Have someone else read your essay and provide feedback.
- Visit the Racer Writing Center to get suggestions for revision.

- **Print out** your essay and proofread it.
- Run spell-check and grammar-check (last thing you should do before printing or submitting the final document).
- Be professional: use black ink, 12-point in a normal font (Time New Roman, Palatino, etc.)
For free help with the essay,

- The Racer Writing Center
  - 809.2267
  - Racerwritingcenter.murraystate.edu
  - See the website for the most updated hours