

# WHAT MAKES A STRONG SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION?

## Hint: It's about being yourself.

More than anything else, telling your story and who you are as openly and authentically as possible will make your application the best it can be.

## Tips for Extracurricular Activities, Work Experience, and Life Circumstances



Have a ton of extracurricular activities? Awesome, tell us about them! Didn't do anything with your school, but were super involved with your faith group? Great, tell us more! Worked every summer at the same restaurant? Give us the details! Interned with an artist? What was that like!

Or maybe none of the above are you. **And that's okay.** You might have life circumstances, like illness, income constraints, childcare responsibilities, needing to support your family or more that prevented you from perhaps having the extracurricular activities or work experience of some of your peers. Tell us about that too.

## Tips for Essays

There are **4 essay options** in a scholarship application with APIA Scholars. You can choose to write **three essay responses** OR **two essay responses** and have a recommendation letter submitted. You have **500 words or less** for each essay response.

- **Brainstorm!** Map it out, draw, create bullet points, freewrite– do whatever works for you to get your thoughts on paper at first.
- **Spend time on your essays** – you may not need all 500 words to answer each, but you will need more than a few sentences.
- **Ask family, friends, teachers and others you trust to read over your essays.** Do they see the unique and remarkable person you are shine through your answers?
- **Make sure to proofread.**
  - Read it out loud
  - Sleep and come back to it
  - Read your sentences in reverse order
  - Proofread slowly
  - Ask someone else to read for grammar
- **Answer every part of the essay question.**
- Avoid generic answers – and avoid thinking your life is generic. **Write boldly.**

**Essay 1:** Tell us about a leadership role you took on. How did it go? What makes a good leader and how could you improve your leadership skills?

**Focus on:** How it felt to lead and what you think a leader is.

**Essay 2:** How has your identity as an Asian American, Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander impacted you? How does this identity interact with your other identities?

**Focus on:** How who you are is what makes (or doesn't make!) your story.

**Essay 3:** How do you define success for yourself, what goals do you have, and what do you need to achieve success?

**Focus on:** Your passions, your dreams, your hopes for the future. Don't sweat it if you don't have it fully figured out yet.

**Essay 4:** What does community mean to you, who is part of yours? How have you supported and been supported by your community?

**Focus on:** Who has been integral to your story. Write from the heart.

## Tips for Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation give us an opportunity to **learn about you from a different perspective**. We want to know a bit of your story from someone who has seen what a remarkable person you are!

- **Pick someone who knows you well** and can speak to your character as a person and community member.  
⇒ A teacher, a supervisor at a job or volunteer position, a coach, a mentor, a spiritual leader are all possibilities. **A relative cannot be your recommender.**
- The recommendation deadline is ONE WEEK BEFORE the application deadline. If your recommender doesn't submit a letter by then, you will have an opportunity to write a 3rd essay response.
- **Do not wait until the last minute!** Ask your preferred recommender as soon as you begin filling out the application.
- **The recommendation form is online only** – make sure your recommender is aware/comfortable with this.
- **Double check your recommender's contact information** before you put it into your application.
- **Be open to a conversation** with your recommender about you, your accomplishments and your goals to help inform their letter.
- **Does your recommender need some tips?** Visit our Applicant Resources at <https://apiascholars.org>

