



The University of Oklahoma®

ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT
OU Writing Center
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Writing Enriched Curriculum

Tillman Scholarship Application Essay Guidelines: What To Do

Read each Essay Question carefully + make sure that you understand what you are being asked to write. If you have any uncertainties, email or meet with me for clarification.

Choose content for each essay that you can *specifically connect* to each question. You will likely want to talk about more than you can say in 400 words, so *choose what is most relevant and best connects* with what each question requires.

Establish + maintain a context or a focus for each essay: choose content examples and details that specifically relate to each question, and connect to other examples or details (i.e. don't provide lists or randomly transition from one detail or example to another).

Write more in an early draft and condense/shorten in a later draft.

Describe + explain military/service experiences using *specific examples + details*. In telling your story, you want to “paint a picture” that *specifically + directly responds* to the essay prompts, but that also tells your story in as unique and compelling a way as possible.

Use succinct, precise, vivid, + detailed language, reference specific examples and details.

If applicable: be open to expressing what is interesting, eccentric, particular, or uniquely characteristic of you, i.e. an aspect of your disposition, personality, or character that either affected what you learned or was otherwise important in your military service experience.

Provide details about, explain, and describe experiences or observations or details in each question. You will want to specifically connect your experiences described in Essay 1 to your educational goals in Essay 2. You will be able to determine how to make connections between your essays once you have drafted them.

i.e. you will specifically describe or explain your career/service goals and make sure to *connect* them to what you have learned from your service. If you can't connect them in the first draft, you might find a way to connect them after additional reflection in a revised draft.

Develop an organizing strategy: a) anecdotal narrative, b) chronological order, c) order of importance, d) reiterate a specific and relevant theme or word that ties everything together or help keep the essay's focus, e) divide your essay into or a simple 2-part description + reflection (one paragraph that describes your experiences followed by a second reflective or self-analytical paragraph that connects them to the essay question).

Balance exhibiting a strong sense of self with humility

Tillman Scholarship Application Essay Guidelines: What to Avoid

Avoid using acronyms—you can't assume application readers have a military background and will be able to decipher them.

Avoid lists, whether of service duties, experiences, or accomplishments, and also avoid lists of descriptive adjectives or details. Explain or describe rather than list. Most writers make lists of three so not making lists will help your writing stand out as less typical, and unique.

Avoid using vague or overly general language, platitudes, and clichés, as none of which will enable your essay to stand out, but instead make you blend in.

Don't draw negative comparisons with others to make your experiences sound superior.

Alternatively, don't affiliate or compare yourself or your experiences with Pat Tillman's life, service, or experiences. Doing so is akin to comparing yourself to God.

Avoid drawing too much attention to honors/decorations/achievements: while you want to draw attention to your service and achievements, it's more important to describe or explain them in the particular *contexts* provided in each question:

- a) What you have learned from your service and
- b) How they have influenced your educational/future service goals.

In describing either, avoid conveying so much confidence that your tone sounds like you're bragging. *In other words, for the purpose of your TMS application, both the value of your experiences and your accomplishments are more important to how you connect them to the question prompts than they are on their own.*

Avoid assuming that you're going to write a perfect essay in one sitting; relatedly, don't be hesitant to engage in the drafting and revision process:

Brainstorm → Freewrite → Draft → Revise → Condense → Edit → Proofread

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