

Eagle Scouts and the College Admissions Process: How to use your Scouting experience to win the spot

We know Scouting is special, and the Eagle Scout Award is evidence of a special Scout. Too bad your college admissions officer couldn't have been at your Court of Honor because then they would know that a Scout is a Leader, is Intellectually Curious, and Adventurous – the three qualities they are looking for!

How do I know this? Bottom line: I am an Eagle Scout who used my Scouting experience to get into Harvard. As an alumnus of Harvard, I now interview candidates for the College each year. When Boy Scout experience is part of the conversation, it is much easier for me to write a review that emphasizes the qualities the admissions officer is looking for. I also sit on Eagle Boards of Review, a process that requires the Eagle Candidate to focus on what Scouting means to them.

So how do you communicate your qualities from Scouting to rise above the rest of the college applications your admissions officer is reviewing? How do you summarize what may be more than half of your life in a way that impresses the heck out of your admissions officer, someone who may never have experienced Scouting? You organize your thoughts a particular way then you create your message for both written and verbal use.

This is what you need to organize a resume of:

1. Leadership experience
2. Scouting as an extra-curricular activity
3. The academics of Scouting
4. Personal growth from Scouting

Along the way, while organizing these areas, you will connect them to the three qualities of a) being a leader, b) being intellectually curious, and c) being adventurous. Scouting has been part of why you are special, so use that to your advantage. You then will craft a short “elevator speech” to spark interest in the listener creating an entrée for you to tell even more. And finally, you will write an essay based on what you have organized.

Why these three elements? First, the resume allows you to see your Scouting career so you can prioritize your message elements. Second, the short speech focuses the subject on what you want to convey quickly. It will come in handy managing college admissions interviews. Third, the essay is to provide fodder for any writing required in your admissions process as well as provide you with pre-organized thoughts to share in your interviews (sparked by the short speech.) This is all about being confident in your Scouting story.

Let’s take leadership as an example as there isn’t room to do all four areas. Organize Leadership (Your Eagle candidate workbook may come in handy.)

1. Leadership resume. Create a leadership resume that lists the positions held and achievements attributable to each. For example, Senior Patrol Leader: Organized and led 12 troop meetings; Organized the Scout-o-Rama ticket sales; Delegated 6 campout evening programs to the Patrol Leader’s Council.
Note that leadership can be a formal office as well as informal. A big one is how you led your Eagle project.
2. Leadership summary talk. Write up a 30-second speech that says you are a very interesting leader and you should want to hear more. For example, “One of the most interesting leadership experiences I had was a real teaching moment for me. We

discovered on a backpacking trip that we underestimated our food needs. After discussing the challenge, we settled on learning how to stretch our food supply by making soups, for example, instead of hamburgers. Fortunately, our Scoutmaster knew a lot about this. I learned to double-check menu planning and also how good hamburger soup is.” 25 seconds that focuses the listener on your message.

3. Leadership essay. Treat this as an AP English writing assignment. Pick three best leadership experiences and tell the story. Start with an introduction supporting the idea that Scouting builds leadership and this is how Scouting helped me. Tell three examples in some detail. Summarize with a paragraph on how this leadership applies to you being a success in college.

Do the same three steps for the other three areas.

Extra-curricular: You spent a lot of time not doing school stuff, so brag about the time spent and the benefits of that time.

Academics: You learned tons of great stuff. Inventory your merit badges and other “academic” pursuits you had in Scouts.

Personal growth: Compare yourself from your tenderfoot days to today and tie the changes to what you did and learned in Scouting.

Summary

If you take this process seriously, you will increase your chances of getting into the college you want. If you want to learn more, there is a 56-page book going into much more detail with many examples on Amazon at <https://amzn.to/3bU2zzY> Good luck, Eagle Scout!