

10 TIPS FOR A COMPETITIVE BOREN APPLICATION

1. Answer The Questions

- Draft your essays, read the questions again, and make sure you have addressed each component.
- The prompts are not asking for a personal narrative. Rather, it is focused on U.S. national security, public service, your proposed abroad program, and strong language immersion components.
- When receiving feedback, make sure your reviewer understands the prompts as well before they offer feedback.

2. Use Transitions, Not Bullet Points

- Address all components in one cohesive response (not point-by-point).
- Although the prompts are broken into 3 bullet points, do not respond in that format.

3. Don't Tell Us What We Already Know

- e.g. "My name is Joe and I am applying for a Boren Scholarship..."
- There are other spaces on the application to highlight your past work and leadership experiences. If an experience is relevant to your security argument or language immersion potential, then include it. Otherwise, leave it out.

4. This essay is NOT a research paper

- Do not include footnotes or quotes from famous politicians (e.g. "Henry Kissinger defines power as...")

5. Nor is this a personal statement

- Avoid long, descriptive prose. Do not start essays with, e.g. "When I first saw the sun rise over the Serengeti..." or spend time sharing information that the prompt does not ask for.

6. Spellcheck is not always your friend

- Be careful with auto-corrected words: E.g. "I would like to study aboard..."

7. Use the space provided. Be concise.

- Use the 2 pages allotted. Don't write just one paragraph.
- On the other hand, do not go on tangents or be redundant just to fill up space.

8. Choose your recommenders wisely!

- Meet with them (early!) and provide them with a draft of your essays.
- Have them address the feasibility of your plan.
- Your recommender should know you well. Just because you get a letter from a prominent name (e.g. a congressman, mayor, senator), it does not mean that it will be a strong recommendation.
- Though it is optional, we recommend a third letter if it is relevant to your Boren proposal. You can get all three letters from faculty, but they should be from different subjects. Otherwise, professional letters are appropriate if it is from a work experience related to your interest in federal government.

9. Work with Campus Rep and Advisors

- Get feedback from your Boren campus representative.
- Ask advisors to review your application.

10. Use all of the [BorenAwards.org](https://www.borenawards.org) resources

- Watch [Youtube videos](#) featuring Boren Scholars.
- Visit career pages of federal government agencies to help you figure out what professional trajectory to pursue.

ADVICE FOR ESSAYS

Essay #1: Significance

Please discuss the following points in one integrated essay, giving equal attention to each point.

- Explain the significance of your proposed country, region, and language to U.S. national security. The Boren Awards recognize a broad definition of national security, but you should make a specific, detailed, and focused argument.
 - Describe how the country, language, and overseas program you selected will help you achieve your career goals, including your plans to fulfill the federal service requirement.
 - If appropriate, you may also include **relevant** past academic, extracurricular, volunteer, internship, and professional experiences. Be specific.
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- **Remember, your argument has to do with United States national security.**
 - Connect issues in your proposed country to its direct effect on national security issues for the U.S. Just mentioning issues within the proposed country is not sufficient.
 - **National security is not defined for you.**
 - Your argument should be connected to your academic interests and professional goals.
 - If past experience is not relevant to your specific national security argument, then don't include it.
 - **This is not a general report on the issues within your proposed country**
 - Avoid including too much factual information about country demographics, etc. Assume readers will understand the general context of the country, unless you are tackling a very specific, esoteric issue.
 - **Know what it takes to achieve your career goals**
 - When outlining career goals, find specific job positions that are available and how it ties in with your national security issue argument. Learn how the hiring process works for a job post.
 - Research positions through sites like careers.state.gov and usajobs.gov

DO

- Address national security based on your own background
- Address future career interest and service requirement
- Explain why you would like to work in particular parts of the government
- Relate all components of the essay to one another
- Give significant attention to all parts of the question

DON'T

- Make your national security argument too general
- Follow the 'shopping list' approach by listing out every single national security issues relating to a proposed country. Instead, focus on a couple of issues in details
- State vague or narrow future goals

Essay #2: Study Abroad Program Description

Please discuss the following points in one integrated essay, giving equal attention to each point.

- Describe the study abroad program's course of study and related cultural activities, as well as the administrative and support services provided (i.e., facilities, housing, resident director, etc.).
 - Describe the language component in as much detail as possible, including the number of classroom contact hours and informal language study opportunities outside of the classroom.
 - Describe your past experience in studying or speaking the language (or another language if relevant), as well as your plans for continuing to study and/or speak the language following your Boren Scholarship.
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- **Specify why the program is a right fit for YOU**
 - Often, applicants only talk about what the program entails, but not how and why the program will enhance your language immersion experience, cultural knowledge, etc. Articulate why the structure and curriculum of the program will allow you to make the most of your Boren experience.
 - If you are a heritage student (either you or your family members are from the proposed country) or a native speaker, you can include that in connection to your language goals. However, don't go on a tangent about personal identities, or it strays into personal statement territory.
 - **Use a variety of resources to identify an appropriate abroad program**
 - Online source: www.iiepassport.org
 - Talk to language professors, Overseas Studies office, or past Boren recipients.
 - You can do multiple programs sequentially, but it needs to be in the same country and same language.

DO

- Be clear about why the study abroad program is right for you
- Give concrete examples of language study, in and out of the classroom
- Explain preparation (or, if a new language, explain why)
- Show ongoing commitment to language learning (lifelong impact)

DON'T

- Give weak reasons for picking the study abroad program (e.g. my school only offers one program in Russian)
- List language goals as an afterthought
 - Should not come secondary to internship, classes, or volunteer opportunities