Interviewing for Scholarships
Kansas State University

These tips cover some common mistakes and some of the factors that come into play. You hopefully already know many of the items mentioned here. Just remember:

1. Nobody can do all these things perfectly.
2. Every conversation is different. Read the moment.
3. You can improve your skills through practice and reflection.

Prepare
Logistically

1. Bring your ID and whatever the panel has asked you to bring.
2. Pack everything you need. Print a good travel checklist from the web if necessary.
3. Scout the location well ahead if possible.
4. Buy/download a map well ahead otherwise.
5. Build flextime into your travel schedule. Allow for the unexpected.
6. Arrive a few minutes early.

Physically

2. Consider packing two options for clothing.
3. Your clothes should feel comfortable.
4. Test-drive them prior to the day.
5. Have them cleaned and pressed.
6. Polish your shoes and belt.
7. Eat two to four hours before you arrive. Moderate. Healthy.
8. Consider taking an early walk
9. Bladder status . . . empty when you arrive.
10. Take some slow deep breaths before you enter. Discretely.

Mentally

1. Know thyself.
2. Work through this Names You Should Know checklist.
4. Know the scholarship. Know the organization that gives the award.
5. Read the newspaper that morning.
6. Look forward to the challenge of difficult questions.
7. Visualize a confident and comfortable meeting.
NonVerbals

Visage

1. Smile when you enter and when you leave. At least.
2. Make eye contact. Spread it around evenly.
3. Show an interest. Let them see an engaged candidate.

Body

1. Do not swivel just because your chair does.
2. Sit erect even if your chair leans back.
3. Lean slightly forward to communicate interest.
4. Pull up to the table when you sit down. The table is the playing field.
5. Never give a judge your shoulder.

Hands

1. Keep them away from your face.
2. Avoid repeated tics like picking at the edge of the table.
3. Let them out of your lap. Hidden hands seem tentative.
5. Same gesture over and over again: bad. Makes you seem automated.
6. Shake hands with a firm grip. Present your hand with confidence.
7. The gesture is incomplete unless you smile and make eye contact.

Holistic

1. Stay focused but relax . . . interviews are not lethal.
2. More deep breaths if the jitters hit you.

Content

Delivery

1. Make sure you are clearly heard. Articulate carefully. Project across the room.
2. Avoid jargon and slang.
3. No chewing gum.
4. Budget the time you spend on any single answer.
5. Pause to collect your thoughts as needed. Keep your brain ahead of your mouth.

Substance

1. Listen carefully to each question.
3. Realize when you have no more to say. Dead air beats rambling.
4. Show respect for opposing views as you articulate your own.
5. Have an introductory or concluding comment ready. Read the situation if asked for one.
6. Admit it if you don't know an answer. Provide the facts or context that you do know.
7. Reveal your expertise and knowledge.
8. Reveal what you are passionate about.

Troubleshooting

1. Move on if you botch an answer.
2. Almost all questions are an invitation to talk. Yes or No is insufficient.
3. Filter your strengths through your experience and goals. No bragging.
4. Don't try to guess what the judges want to hear. Show them how you think.
5. Ask for clarification if the question is unclear or too broad.
6. Try not to introduce topics about which you are unprepared to talk.
7. Do not ask the judges topical questions. It eats your time if they answer.

General

1. Thank the judges for the opportunity to talk with them.
2. Show your positive side.
3. Make it feel more like a discussion. Less like an oral exam.
4. The judges want to get to know you through the discussion. Let them.
5. Have the confidence to sound as sharp and insightful as you really are.