



Secrets to Winning a Scholarship

Credit to Mark Kantrowitz
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Strategies for Winning Scholarships

- ▶ It's a numbers game
 - ▶ Even among talented students, who wins involves a bit of luck, not just skill
 - ▶ To win more scholarships, apply to more scholarships, but only if you qualify
- ▶ You can't win if you don't apply
 - ▶ One in four students never applies for financial aid
- ▶ It gets easier after your first 6 applications
 - ▶ Essays can be reused and tailored to each new application
- ▶ Don't miss deadlines

Searching for Scholarships

- ▶ Start searching as soon as possible
 - ▶ If you wait until spring to start searching, you will miss half the deadlines
 - ▶ There are many scholarships available to students in grades 9, 10 and 11, not just high school seniors
 - ▶ There are even scholarships for students in grades K-8 and to current college students
- ▶ Use a free scholarship matching service like Fastweb
- ▶ Look for scholarship listing books at the library or bookstore, but check the publication date

More Ways of Searching for Money

- ▶ Look for local scholarships on bulletin boards near the financial aid offices, or the library's jobs and careers section
- ▶ Look in the coupon section of the newspaper
- ▶ Answer the optional questions on a scholarship matching service for twice as many matches
- ▶ Look for near-miss matches
- ▶ Pursue less competitive scholarships, such as small awards and essay contests, since they are easier to win, the money adds up and they help you win bigger scholarships

Tips on Winning Scholarships

- ▶ Prioritize your applications by deadline and the expected value of the scholarship
- ▶ Use a calendar and checklist to get organized
- ▶ Create an accomplishments resume
- ▶ Tailor your application to the sponsor's goals
- ▶ Read and follow the instructions
- ▶ Make your application stand out from the crowd
- ▶ Ask to be nominated
- ▶ Practice on a copy of the application form

Writing a Winning Scholarship Essay

- ▶ Answer the essay question orally and transcribe the recording
- ▶ Use an outline to organize your thoughts
- ▶ Give examples and be specific
- ▶ Personalize your essay and be passionate
- ▶ Write about something of interest to you
- ▶ Talk about your impact on other people
- ▶ Proofread a printed copy of the essay for spelling and grammar errors

Tips for Letters of Recommendation

- ▶ Ask the teacher whether she can write you a *great* letter of recommendation
- ▶ The recommendation should be relevant to the scholarship sponsor's goal
- ▶ Provide the recommender with a copy of your accomplishments resume
- ▶ Provide the recommender with a SASE and all required forms
- ▶ Thank the recommender for writing the letter

Acing the Scholarship Interview

- ▶ Practice, practice, practice
- ▶ Videotape a mock interview and review the recording afterward
- ▶ Wear appropriate business attire
- ▶ Visit the restroom before the interview
- ▶ Brush your teeth and wear deodorant
- ▶ Arrive 15 minutes early
- ▶ Pay attention to the interviewer's name
- ▶ Be polite and send a thank you note afterward

Telephone and Webcam Interviews

- ▶ Conduct the interview in a quiet room
- ▶ Use a corded phone, nor a cordless or cell phone, and do not use a speakerphone
- ▶ Clean the lens on your webcam
- ▶ Make sure there is nothing embarrassing within view of the webcam
- ▶ Look at the webcam when you speak, not the video of the interviewer

Other Scholarship Application Tips

- ▶ Use a professional email address, such as firstname.lastname@gmail.com
- ▶ Clean up the content of your Facebook account, removing inappropriate and immature material
- ▶ Google your name to see what shows up
- ▶ Make a photocopy of your application before mailing it
- ▶ Send the application by certified mail, return receipt requested or with delivery confirmation
- ▶ If rejected, ask for the reviewer comments

After You Win a Scholarship

- ▶ Write a letter of appreciation to the donor/foundation!
- ▶ Understand your college's outside scholarship policy and seek adjustments to the cost of attendance or defer a scholarship if necessary
- ▶ If your scholarship is renewable, review the requirements for retaining eligibility
- ▶ Tell the scholarship sponsors when you win a major award or other recognition
- ▶ Understand the taxability of your scholarships
 - ▶ Amounts for tuition, fees, books, supplies tax-free
 - ▶ Amounts for room and board, transportation and other living expenses are taxable

Beware of Scholarship Scams

- ▶ If you have to pay money to get money, it is probably a scam
- ▶ Never invest more than a postage stamp to get information about scholarships or to apply for a scholarship
- ▶ Nobody can guarantee that you'll win a scholarship
- ▶ Do not give out personal information like bank account numbers, credit card numbers or Social Security numbers
- ▶ Beware of the unclaimed aid myth

Most Common Application Mistakes

- ▶ Missing deadlines
- ▶ Failing to proofread the application
- ▶ Failing to follow directions (essay length, number of recommendations)
- ▶ Omitting required information
- ▶ Applying for an award when you don't qualify
- ▶ Failing to apply for an award for which you are eligible
- ▶ Failing to tailor the application to the sponsor
- ▶ Writing a boring essay

Top Ten Most Unusual Scholarships

1. Scholarship for Left-Handed Students
2. Duck Brand Duct Tape Stuck at Prom Contest
3. David Letterman Telecommunications Scholarship
4. Zolp Scholarships
5. Patrick Kerr Skateboard Scholarship
6. Scholar Athlete Milk Mustache of the Year Award
7. National Marbles Tournament Scholarships
8. Klingon Language Institute Scholarship
9. National Beef Ambassador Program
10. Vegetarian Resource Group Scholarship

Top Ten Most Prestigious Scholarships

1. Marshall Scholarships
2. Rhodes Scholarship
3. Winston Churchill Scholarship Program
4. Harry S. Truman Scholarships
5. Henry Luce Foundation Scholarship
6. Morris K. Udall Foundation Undergraduate Scholarships
7. Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program
8. Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship
9. Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Essay Contest
10. National Merit Scholarship Corporation

Top Ten Most Generous Scholarships

1. Intel Science Talent Search
2. Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology
3. NIH Undergraduate Scholarship Program
4. Elks National Foundation Most Valuable Student Competition
5. Davidson Fellows
6. Intel International Science and Engineering Fair
7. Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships
8. Collegiate Inventors Competition
9. Coca-Cola Scholars Program Scholarship
10. Gates Millennium Scholars

Top Ten Scholarships for Community Service

1. Segal AmeriCorps Education Award
2. The Do Something Awards
3. Comcast Leaders and Achievers Scholarship
4. Discover Card Tribute Award
5. Echoing Green Fellowship
6. The Heart of America Christopher Reeve Award
7. Kohl's Kids Who Care Program
8. Samuel Huntington Public Service Award
9. National Caring Award
10. Youth Action Net

Top Ten Scholarships that Don't Need an A

1. US Department of Education
2. AXA Achievement Scholarship Program
3. Horatio Alger Association Scholarships
4. Ayn Rand Institute
5. Girls Going Places Scholarship
6. Holocaust Remembrance Project Essay Contest
7. Americanism Essay Contest
8. AFSA National Scholarship Essay Contest
9. Red Vines Drawing Contest
10. Community Foundation Scholarships

Key Scholarship Resources

- ▶ <http://msun.edu/finaid/scholarships>
- ▶ www.finaid.org/scholarships
- ▶ www.mus.edu/Prepare/Pay/Scholarships
- ▶ www.finaid.org/scholarshipscams
- ▶ www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams
- ▶ www.finaid.org/taxbenefits
- ▶ www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p970.pdf

Scholarship Search Engines

- ▶ www.sfs.mus.edu/scholarship_search
- ▶ www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org
- ▶ www.fastweb.com
- ▶ www.scholarships.com
- ▶ www.scholarshipmonkey.com