

## Scholarship Guide

### Hunt for Scholarships: How to Start

- **Go online.** Take advantage of free online scholarship searches, such as [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com). Your college's Web site may also have a list of scholarships.
- **Search your community.** Who might offer scholarships?
  - Organizations in your neighborhood
  - Cultural organizations who provide awards based on ethnic background or heritage
  - Your parents' employers
- **Talk to faculty and your academic advisor.** Professors and academic advisors may know about grant opportunities. Ask them about grants, private and corporate sponsorships for which you might qualify.

### *Scholarship Essays: Master the Basics*

Pay attention to details for a high quality essay.

**Get organized.** Brainstorm to generate some good ideas and then create an outline to help you get going.

**Demonstrate originality and creativity.** To catch the attention of a scholarship judge, find a hook that will interest the reader right away.

**Show, don't tell.** For example, if you're describing an activity you participated in, don't describe it in general terms. Be specific! What duties did you perform? What affect did it have on your life or the lives of others?

**Develop a theme that fits the scholarship.** What sort of student is the sponsor looking for? Include elements in your essay that complement the sponsor's expectations (without pretending to be someone you aren't).

**Turn in a professional-looking essay.** Write a second draft to catch mistakes and better organize your thoughts. If possible, type and double-space your essay. Check spelling and grammar. Finally, share your essay with friends, family or teachers for another proofread.

### Keep Your Scholarship

Some of your scholarships may be renewable. However, awards might have ongoing requirements. These may include:

- **Submission of renewal application.** Scholarships may require you to submit a new application each academic year.
- **Grade point average (GPA).** You may need to maintain a minimum GPA to remain eligible.
- **Satisfactory academic progress.** You may be required to fulfill certain academic requirements, such as completing a certain number of credits or courses.
- **Designated field of study.** Will you lose the award if you change majors?
- **Full-time enrollment status.** Scholarships frequently require you to be considered a full-time student.

If there is any question whether your scholarship has renewal provisions, talk to your school or scholarship sponsor as soon as you know you've won the scholarship.

Remember that sponsors offer scholarships throughout the year. Check [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) for new awards!

### What Do Judges Look For?

Make it past the first round by following these simple rules:

- **Do you qualify?** Sounds simple, but students every year waste time by applying for awards they aren't eligible to win.
- **Is your application presented well?** Type your essay and other information. Messy handwriting and excessive scratch-outs could land your application in the trash.
- **Did you include all required documents?** Required documents that are frequently left out of applications include: transcripts, photos, references and a letter of recommendation.
- **Did you answer all of the questions?** Double-check that you haven't forgotten any required information.

**FastTip:** Remember that scholarship and financial aid information should be free! Search for FREE scholarships at: [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com).

Free Search:  
\$1 billion in scholarships  
[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

## Manage Your Student Loan

### Repayment Options

Each repayment option offers varying degrees of flexibility, depending on the amount you borrowed and the loan type.

#### Standard Repayment Plan

**Payment:** Monthly payment is fixed (min. \$50). A payment is equal to total loan amount (plus interest) divided by the number of months in your repayment period, up to 120 months (10 years).

**Advantages:** Economical and predictable; keeps interest to a minimum.

**Disadvantages:** Monthly payment stays the same regardless of income.

#### Extended Repayment Plan

**Payment:** Same as the Standard Plan, except that students receive a longer period of time to pay off their loan (usually 12 to 30 years). The larger the loan amount, the more years you'll have to pay the loan back.

**Advantages:** Lower payments than the Standard Plan.

**Disadvantages:** Increases the amount you pay in interest over the life of the loan.

#### Graduated Repayment Plan

**Payment:** Repayment amount increases every two years until the loan is paid off (takes between 12 and 30 years). The larger the loan amount, the more years you'll have to pay the loan back.

**Advantages:** Monthly payments will be easier to manage at first; initial payments will be lower than the Standard Plan.

**Disadvantage:** You will end up paying more in interest. Also, without a stable or increasing income, you may have trouble as the monthly payments rise over time.

#### Income Contingent Plan

**Payment:** Your monthly payment is adjusted annually based on yearly income, family size, interest rate and loan amount. Your monthly payments will rise and fall in relation to your income.

**Advantages:** You usually have up to 25 years to repay. Any portion of the loan amount that has not been repaid up to this time is forgiven.

**Disadvantages:** After 25 years, the forgiven loan balance will be counted as income and is taxable. Parent loans are not eligible to be repaid with the income contingent plan.

### Loan Smarts: What You Can Do

- Keep all your loan documents in one location. Refer to those documents if you have questions about your loan.
- Keep records of all communications, including the person you talked to, the date and what was said. If you send letters, include your loan account number on each page and then copy the letters and responses for your file.
- Notify your school and/or loan holder in writing if you move, change your name or Social Security Number, or re-enroll in school. If your loan holder loses track of you, you could miss payments.
- Ask questions of your lender or college if there's something you don't understand. If there is a problem, ask to speak with a manager or supervisor.

### Need Money for College?

Get your share:

Search \$1 billion in scholarships

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

For info on loan repayment, visit the Dept. of Education's site at: <http://studentaid.ed.gov>.

### Loan Problems? Ask For Help!

If you're having trouble making payments, don't wait until you can't afford to make another payment. Ask for help from your loan holder or loan servicer right away!

Do anything you can to avoid having your loan go into default, which is usually what happens when you fail to make any payments over a nine-month period (or miss some payments over an 11-month period).

The consequences of default are very serious. What can this mean for you?

**Immediate payment:** The entire balance (principal and interest) can come due immediately.

**Collection agency involvement:** You may have to pay additional interest charges, late fees, collection costs, and possibly court costs and attorney fees.

**Damaged credit rating:** A poor rating could negatively affect an application for a credit card, car loan or home mortgage, as well as renting an apartment or applying for a job. Your default will remain on your credit report for up to seven years.

**Garnished wages:** Your employer, at the request of the loan holder, may withhold a portion of your wages.

Keep your loan in good standing by making your payments on time. Talk to your lender and discuss all options available that will allow you to make payments.