

Scholarship Guide

Master the Basics

Where to start

Go online and take advantage of free scholarship searches such as www.fastweb.com for local and national awards.

Consult your school guidance counselor about private and corporate sponsorships.

Search your community. There are many organizations, both religious and cultural, that may offer awards.

How to prepare

Get organized and keep the scholarships you are working on separate from those you have not started. Use a calendar to keep track of dates and deadlines. Create a folder for each scholarship application and materials.

Know your time frame to apply. Complete and send the easiest scholarships first. Then focus on the scholarships with earlier deadlines and ones that may require more time. Allow plenty of time when requesting letters of recommendation.

Submit your application

Remember to check spelling and grammar.

Proofread your materials and have a teacher, parent or friend read over your application and essay if submitting online or by mail. They can provide feedback and catch mistakes.

What Do Judges Look For?

Do you qualify? Every year, students waste time by applying for awards they aren't eligible to win. If you don't qualify, don't enter!

Is your application presented well? Type your essay, place the application, essay and other contents in a large folder for mailing. Do not fold any of the materials.

Did you include all required documents? Make sure you include all required academic transcripts, references and letters of recommendation.

Did you answer all of the questions? Double-check that you haven't forgotten any required information.

FREE Scholarship Search

1.3 million scholarships
worth \$3 billion!

www.fastweb.com

The Scholarship Essay

Before you begin:

Develop a theme that fits the scholarship. Learn about the provider's mission and goals. Include elements in your essay to complement the sponsor's expectations. For example, if the provider is interested in community outreach, highlight ways you impact your community within your essay.

A few topic ideas:

Personal achievements

- Talk about specific interactions you may have had with others. Do you still keep in touch with anyone you've helped? How did you influence their lives?

- How did your achievements reflect your values? Why are your achievements important to you? Did you do something that received high praise or recognition?

- Personalize your experience. For example, what makes the volunteer and community service you've performed unique? What made you stand out?

Tip: Judges want to see how your achievements impact you personally!

Academic plans and possible major

- Instead of saying, "Science is my favorite subject," discuss a specific assignment or project that you worked on that sparked your interest.

- Avoid saying that you selected a major or career path to "help people." What specific actions can you take to improve the lives of others? Discuss how your values are relevant to what you will be studying in school.

Tip: Don't focus on the classes you hope to take in college. Focus on your degree and future goals and why they are important to you.

Social issues and current events

- Think about current issues or events in the news that you feel strongly about.

- Do you know a lot about a controversial topic?

- Do you know of someone who is directly involved in an issue who might be able to provide insight?

Tip: Summarize the issue briefly. Share your perspective, offer constructive criticism and address all sides of the issue, not just your own.

Mentors, admirers and influences

- Think about your friends and family, community and the things you've learned outside of the classroom. Pick specific people, incidents and learning experiences to write about that will let your personality come through.

- Is there a person you aspire to be like within your chosen major or career path? Someone who encouraged you to succeed? Focus on specific qualities or actions that the person has inspired in you.

Tip: When writing about others, be sure to focus on how this person has inspired you and shaped your life.