



Searching for Scholarships

A (mini) Handbook

Revised on 10/20/2010 11:49 AM



WHAT ARE SCHOLARSHIPS?

Many colleges and universities can *seem* unaffordable due to their hefty price tags. But, whether you are considering a two-year or four-year school, there are several ways to minimize the impact of post-secondary schooling on your wallet. Scholarships are just one source of financial aid that can be used to pay for college (other sources include grants, loans, and work-study).

Think of scholarships as “free money.” Scholarships are awarded to students in amounts that range anywhere from a hundred dollars to full tuition! Scholarships are used towards your college education and you do not have to pay them back.

Millions of dollars are set aside each year by private donors, corporations, foundations, and community organizations in the form of scholarships. These companies want to invest in your education! Every scholarship will be different because each sponsor outlines how their scholarship will be awarded. *YOU* can apply for scholarships if you fit the specific criteria of the scholarship, which can be based on academic merit, athletic merit, leadership, community service, writing ability, artistic ability, financial need or economic background, racial or ethnic background, major, college, etc.



WHERE DO I FIND SCHOLARSHIPS?

Starting a scholarship search can be hard if you do not know all of your resources. Luckily, many of the resources that you will need for your scholarship search are right in front of you! The following list is meant to guide you at both the local and national level. Many local scholarship opportunities will be open to a select small group of people. This could mean a smaller pool of applicants, which makes you more competitive! Resources for national scholarships are broader, but will allow you to access hundreds of opportunities.

START LOCALLY:

- Explore Family Connection's Scholarship List – Under **Colleges** Tab
- Explore the Career Center
- Explore Colleges/Universities Websites for Scholarship Opportunities!
- Ask your counselors
- Contact your employer or your parents' employers
- Check with local businesses, religious organizations, volunteer groups, military branches, or other groups that you may be closely affiliated with to see what opportunities may be open to you (it doesn't hurt to ask!)
- Look through the reference section of your local library
- Ask your intended college about scholarship opportunities, especially opportunities that may be open for your particular field of study.

MOVE NATIONALLY:

- There are many online free scholarship search databases (you can build a profile, explore the database, download applications, and have deadlines sent to your email)
- Look at the websites of national foundations and organizations that fit your interests or intended field of study.
- Some large corporations offer scholarships (Coca-Cola, Wal-Mart, Target, Best Buy, etc.); explore their websites for more information.



INTERNET RESOURCES

LOCAL INTERNET RESOURCES:

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS -

Check out the Scholarship list in **Family Connection**
FAMILY CONNECTION!



Access **Family Connection** -using FCPS 24-7 Learning! Click on
Connection Logo – Click on the “Colleges” tab – scroll down to “Scholarship List.”

Family

NATIONAL INTERNET RESOURCES (Financial Aid & Scholarship Information):

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) www.fafsa.gov – Check out FAFSA4caster
Student Aid – Financial Aid Information -www.studentaid.ed.gov

Fast Web***Free scholarship search!*** www.fastweb.com

College Answer- College Planning and Scholarship Information provided by Salle Mae Corporation -
www.collegeanswer.com

College Funds - General private scholarship source - www.collegefunds.net

CollegeNet - General private scholarship source -www.collegenet.com

Fin Aid –Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid & Free Scholarship Search - www.finaid.org -
www.finaid.org/scholarships

Go College - General private scholarship source - www.gocollege.com

Go Faar - Financial Aid Awareness and Readiness - www.gofaar.org

Scholarships.Com – Find money for college – General private scholarship source –
www.scholarship.com



DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS?

No! Scholarship applications will take *time* and *effort*, however, your scholarship search should be FREE! All of the resources that you need throughout your scholarship search will be accessible at no cost to you. Again, scholarships are “free money”: you don’t pay to apply and you don’t pay them back!



HOW DO I APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS?

Searching for scholarships takes time and energy. The key to an effective scholarship search is to manage your time by creating a system that works for you. Here are some helpful tips that will help your search pay off:

- 1. Start Now.** Searching and applying for scholarships take time. Hearing back from scholarship sponsors also takes time (winners of many scholarships may not be notified for over eight weeks from the time that they submit their application). Don't be discouraged if you don't hear back from sponsors early. Knowing the timetable of your scholarships will help eliminate your frustrations or anxieties about it.
- 2. Set Realistic Goals.** You can do this! Do not overwhelm yourself. Start out with a goal of maybe one scholarship a week and see where that takes you. If you have to scale back, you can; if you can do more, go for it! Whatever your goal is, hold yourself accountable.
- 3. Check Eligibility.** Scholarships will have different eligibility requirements listed on their applications. Save yourself time and make sure that you are eligible for a scholarship *before* you start applying. (If you are planning on attending a two-year school, make sure the scholarship specifies that it can be applied towards that school; Underclassmen, make sure that the scholarship is not restricted to Seniors)
- 4. Double-Check Application.** Always proofread and revise your essays. Also, be sure that all of your materials are in order and properly labeled. Make it easy for the people that will be reading your materials... after all, you are asking them for money!
- 5. Make Copies.** It is good practice to keep a record of all of the materials involved in your scholarship application process. Besides having this material for your own reference, you never know when a copy of this material will come in handy (it could be a huge time saver if a sponsor loses your application, or you may be able to reuse an essay).
- 6. Adhere To All Deadlines.** Note all of your deadlines early. If your scholarship requires a recommendation letter or transcript, give yourself sufficient time to ask for those materials.
- 7. Ask For Help.** If you are having trouble with any step of your scholarship process, ask for help. Know your resources- parents, teachers, friends, counselors, and your career center. If you have questions about the specifics of the application you can always contact the sponsor to find out more.
- 8. Be Persistent.** After you have submitted an application keep your search rolling by moving on to the next scholarship!
- 9. Write "Thank You" Notes.** Write a letter of thanks to the sponsor of each scholarship that you receive.



BEWARE OF SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS!



Unfortunately, there are several companies that will ask you for a financial investment in order to fulfill outlandish scholarship promises. Do not let these companies entice you into paying for resources that you can get for **FREE!** If you have a question about the legitimacy of a company check its status with the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.com).

This website offers the following advice to protect yourself from scholarship scams: (www.finaid.org/scholarships/scams.phtml)

1. If you must pay money to get money, it might be a scam.
2. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
3. Spend the time, not the money.
4. Never invest more than a postage stamp to get information about scholarships.
5. Nobody can guarantee that you'll win a scholarship.
6. Legitimate scholarship foundations do not charge application fees.
7. If you're suspicious of an offer, it's usually with good reason.

Similarly, the Federal Trade Commission cautions you to beware of the following lines: (<http://www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams>)

1. "The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back."
2. "You can't get this information anywhere else."
3. "I just need your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship."
4. "We'll do all the work."
5. "The scholarship will cost some money."
6. "You've been selected by a 'national foundation' to receive a scholarship" or "You're a finalist" in a contest you never entered.



SCHOLARSHIP RESTRICTIONS AND REGULATIONS

Once a scholarship has been won, it is important to note all restrictions and regulations that should be followed in order to keep your scholarship. Some scholarships will require you to maintain a certain GPA, major, amount of volunteer hours, etc. Be sure to note all of these requirements so that you can *keep* the money you have won!

Many scholarships can be generally applied towards filling your cost of attendance, however, some scholarships may be allotted to pay for a specific piece of you education—i.e. book scholarships. Note these restrictions when calculating your budget.



SCHOLARSHIP TRACKER

Attached you will find a spreadsheet that will assist you in tracking your scholarship search. Feel free to create your own method!

