

Scholarship Searching Tips for Seniors

Top Nine Things You Should Be Doing Right Now:

1. Update resume
2. Request letters of recommendation at least TWO WEEKS in ADVANCE of deadlines.
3. Have parents/guardians ask employers if scholarships are available through their work
4. Check with your OWN employer/COOP if scholarships are available
5. Check local organizations in your city/town for scholarships (Elks, Rotary, Boys and Girls Club, Churches, etc.) Check with your OWN LOCAL High School
6. Work on quality personal statement/essay
7. Identify what unique qualities you have as a student (non-traditional, learning disability, volunteering work, medical condition, LGBT, that you can use in searching scholarship databases)
8. Talk to your parents/guardians about financing college and together review resources on Collegeboard.org to plan for college
9. Research scholarship using the search engines provided

CRITICAL: Once you have decided on what college you will attend you should meet with the financial aid office at the college/university ASAP to review your financial package to see what scholarships they have you could apply for!!!

Financial Aid/Scholarships/Search Engines

www.fasfa.ed.gov FASFA information and site to file FASFA electronically.

www.studentaid.ed.gov Information of federal student aid and more.

www.osfa.mass.edu Massachusetts Offices of Student Financial Assistance website

www.collegeboard.org Financial information and link to fill out CSS Profile

www.mefa.org Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. MEFA Counselor link walks students and parents through the financial aid process. Also, information on college saving plans, loan programs and more.

www.fastweb.com Scholarship search, financial aid information and more.

www.finaid.org Comprehensive site with hundreds of links to all sorts of financial aid and scholarship information

How to Apply for a Scholarship

Applying for a scholarship is a lot like applying to colleges. You start with large numbers of possibilities and cut that down to a short list of choices. Then you have to submit applications that include, recommendations and lists of achievements that highlight your best qualities.

You may hear various suggestions about the best way to apply for scholarships. The truth is, what works for one person may not work for the other. There are no secrets to applying. The best advice is to use common sense and follow directions.

Don't miss Deadlines

Some scholarships have deadlines early in the fall of senior year. Mark the due dates on your calendar and work your way backwards to figure out how much time you'll have to get each piece of the application finished.

Start Your Research Early

Researching scholarships, requesting information and application materials, and completing applications all take time. Use Scholarship Search to get started.

Read Eligibility Requirements Carefully

If you have a question about whether you qualify for a certain scholarship, contact the scholarship sponsor directly.

Get Organized

Make a separate file for each scholarship and sort the files by application due dates. You should also gather the items you'll need to apply. Many scholarships ask you to send some or all of the following:

High school transcript

Standardized test scores

Financial aid form; such as FASFA or CSS/Financial Aid profile

Parent's financial information, including tax returns

One or more essays

One or more letters of recommendation

Proof of eligibility for the scholarship (for example, proof of membership in a certain group).

You might also need to prepare for an interview. And if you're competing for talent-based scholarships, you'll probably need to audition or submit a portfolio.

Follow Instructions

Stick to the word limit for the essay. If supporting materials are not requested, don't send them.

Check Your Application

Before you send the application in:

**Use common sense,
start early and follow
directions.**

Make sure you filled in all the blanks. You can contact scholarship sponsors if you aren't sure how to fill out part of the application.

Make sure your answers are readable. If you can, fill out the application online. If you have to write out the application, print neatly.

If you're using materials (such as a cover letter or an essay) from another scholarship application, make sure you haven't left any incorrect names.

Proofread your application. Run spell check and grammar check on the application.

Also, have someone else read your essays to catch mistakes and give you feedback.

Remember to sign and date your application.

Keep Copies of Everything

Having copies of your scholarship applications makes it easy to resend quickly if application materials get lost in the mail. If you're applying for a scholarship online, save copies of your work on your computer.

Track the Package

If you're submitting your application by mail, consider using certified mail or requesting a return receipt to confirm that order.