

Scholarship Tips!

General Scholarship Tips:

- Many Scholarship processes are highly competitive, and students should be careful and thorough when filing out applications to give themselves the best possible advantage.
- Students CANNOT assume that because they have received a scholarship previously, that they will automatically receive another award. Be aware that there are always new students completing for awards and students must present a high quality package every time they apply for a scholarship.

Pre-Application Tips:

- Students should start to build a network of professionals and educators who can write recommendations, help proofread applications and essays, and guide them through the application process.
- Each scholarship fund has its own specific guidelines. Before applying for a scholarship, a student must be certain that they meet, or will meet, all the necessary qualifications.

General Application Tips:

- Students should make a checklist of what they need to have for the application.
- Always keep copies of the ENTIRE Scholarship application incase a submission is lost.
- Students with multiple names, such as two last names, should be consistent with name use throughout the application.
- Students should set up a separate email account for college and scholarship information. This email address should be professional, for example: John.Smith@yahoo.com
- No substitutions! If an item is requested, particularly for a need based program, provide it. If you don't understand the request, ask. In competitive programs, the missing or substituted item could tank an otherwise strong application.
- Students should always fill out their own scholarship applications, not parents, guardians or counselors.
- All applications should be proofread. Pay particular attention to any spaces left blank. If the answer is zero, write in 0 rather than leaving a blank spot. Blank spaces can deem an application incomplete and ineligible!
- Start early! Leave plenty of time to check, double-check, and triple-check to make sure all directions have been followed and that the best application possible is being submitted.
- If a photo is requested, use a suitable color head shot, not a prom photo.
- If you are notified that you have received a scholarship always send a thank you note to the donor.

Personal Statement/ Essay Tips:

- Personal statements/ essays are often viewed as the equivalent of a face to face interview.
- Avoid long, drawn out, essay responses. While a background story is sometimes necessary, try to get to the point but don't be so brief that the importance is lost. Remember the committee members reading an essay have many more applications to read.
- Students should make connections between areas of study, career goals, interests and personal philosophies.
- Cover all topics requested in the prompt and use specific examples whenever possible.
- When writing a personal statement, pay attention to tone. Does this student sound like a student that the donor's organization would be proud to sponsor?
- Essays should always be saved on a computer or in an email program. This will save frustration when websites have errors and can also be useful when a student comes across the same essay question for a different scholarship.

Recommendation Letter Tips:

- Good examples of people to ask for references include past or present teachers/ professors, past or present employers, religious leaders, community leaders, and organization leaders. Generally, family and friends do not make the best references.
- The letter should be tailored to the particular scholarship, not generic.
- Provide the recommender with a resume or list of activities and accomplishments.
- Always give the recommender adequate time to prepare the letter or form.

Transcripts/ Academic Record Tips:

- Students should always explain situations/circumstances/ reasons behind a significant change in academic performance.
- If the school's grading system is not based on a standard scale, include a description of how the school determines grades.
- Verify whether the application requires an *official* or *unofficial* transcript. Many schools charge a fee for official transcripts, so if the application does not require one, this can save the student money.

Scholarship Search Tips:

- Research as many funding sources as possible.
- Use recommended search engines to help find reliable Scholarship applications.
- Use parents/ guardians and other family members! Many companies offer scholarships solely to the children/relatives of employees.
- If a student is headed for a specific field, they can look at the leaders in that field or industry to help find Scholarships. For example, a pre-nursing or pre med student should check out websites for drug manufacturers or companies that do medical research
- Look at local organizations/ groups such as churches and recreational centers.