

Top Twelve Tips on Winning a Scholarship

1. Start searching for scholarships as soon as possible. Don't wait until the spring of your senior year in high school to start searching, or you'll miss half the deadlines. There are many scholarships available to students in grades K-11, not just high school seniors. Continue searching for scholarships even after you are enrolled in college.
2. Use a free scholarship matching service like Fastweb.com. The Fastweb database is updated daily and the site will email you notifications of new scholarships that match your personal background profile.
3. Answer all of the optional questions on a scholarship matching web site for about twice as many matches.
4. Look for local scholarships on bulletin boards near the guidance counselor or financial aid offices, or the library's jobs and careers section. Also look in the coupon section of the Sunday newspaper. Improve grades for more matches.
5. To win more scholarships, apply to every scholarship for which you are eligible. It's a numbers game. Even among talented students, winning involves a bit of luck, not just skill. Pursue less competitive scholarships, such as small awards and essay contests. They are easier to win and help you win bigger scholarships. You can't win if you don't apply. It gets easier after your first 6 applications. Essays can be reused and tailored to each new application.
6. Don't miss deadlines. Use checklists to get organized.
7. Tailor your application to the sponsor's goals. Read and follow the instructions carefully.
8. If you have difficulty writing essays, record yourself as you answer the question out loud and transcribe the recording. Most people think and speak faster than they can write or type. Write an outline afterward to organize your thoughts.
9. Personalize your essay and be passionate. Write about something of interest to you. Make your application stand out from the crowd. Talk about your impact on other people. Give examples and be specific.
10. Google your name to ensure that you have a professional online presence. Use a clean email address, such as `firstname.lastname@gmail.com`. Review your Facebook account, removing inappropriate and immature material.
11. Proofread a printed copy of your essay and the application for spelling and grammar errors.
12. Make a photocopy of your application before mailing it. Send the application by certified mail, return receipt requested or with delivery confirmation.

Preview of Secrets to Winning a Scholarship

This quick reference guide is a preview of Fastweb's new book, *Secrets to Winning a Scholarship*. This book provides practical, clear and concise advice about how to find and win scholarships and fellowships.

Brought to you by Fastweb, the leading free scholarship matching service, *Secrets to Winning a Scholarship* gives you the insider insights and expert tips you need to improve your chances of winning a scholarship. Learn strategies for increasing the number of scholarship matches, writing more memorable scholarship essays, acing the scholarship interview and maximizing your chances of winning a scholarship. *Secrets to Winning a Scholarship* will help you go for the gold with unique information and advice about winning scholarships from one of the nation's leading experts on planning and paying for college.

Secrets to Winning a Scholarship is available through Amazon.com in both paperback and Kindle formats. Visit www.fastweb.com/scholarshipsecrets for more information.

Common Scholarship Application Mistakes

- Missing deadlines
- Failing to proofread the application
- Failing to follow directions, especially regarding essay length and the number of recommendations
- Omitting required information
- Applying for an award when you don't qualify
- Failing to apply for an award for which you are eligible
- Failing to tailor the application to the sponsor
- Writing a boring essay
- Writing an essay that may offend the reviewer
- Including exaggerations or lies on your application

Beware of Scholarship Scams

- If you have to pay money to get money, it's probably a scam.
- Never invest more than a postage stamp to get information about scholarships or to apply for a scholarship.
- Nobody can guarantee that you'll win a scholarship.
- Do not give out personal information like bank account, credit card or Social Security numbers.
- Beware of the unclaimed aid myth. The only money that goes unclaimed is money that can't be claimed.

Top Ten Most Unusual Scholarships

1. Scholarship for Left-Handed Students
2. Duck Brand Duct Tape Stuck at Prom Contest
3. David Letterman Telecommunications Scholarships
4. Zolp Scholarships
5. Patrick Kerr Skateboard Scholarships
6. Scholar Athlete Milk Mustache of the Year Award
7. National Marbles Tournament Scholarships
8. Klingon Language Institute Scholarships
9. National Beef Ambassador Program
10. Vegetarian Resource Group Scholarships

Top Ten Most Prestigious Scholarships

1. Marshall Scholarships
2. Rhodes Scholarships
3. Winston Churchill Scholarship Program
4. Harry S. Truman Scholarships
5. Henry Luce Foundation Scholarships
6. Morris K. Udall Foundation Undergraduate Scholarships
7. Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program
8. Barry M. Goldwater Scholarships
9. Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Essay Contest
10. National Merit Scholarship Corporation

Top Ten Most Generous Scholarships

1. Intel Science Talent Search
2. Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology
3. NIH Undergraduate Scholarship Program
4. Elks Nat'l Foundation Most Valuable Student Competition
5. Davidson Fellows
6. Intel International Science and Engineering Fair
7. Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships
8. Collegiate Inventors Competition
9. Coca-Cola Scholars Program Scholarships
10. Gates Millennium Scholars

Top Ten Scholarships for Age 13 and Under

1. National Spelling Bee
2. National Geography Bee
3. National History Day Contest
4. Jif Most Creative Peanut Butter Sandwich Contest
5. Scholastic Art & Writing Awards
6. Christopher Columbus Community Service Awards
7. Dick Blick Linoleum Block Print Contest
8. Gloria Barron Prize for Your Heroes
9. Patriot's Pen
10. Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

Top Ten Scholarships for Community Service

1. Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards
2. The Do Something Awards
3. Comcast Leaders and Achievers Scholarships
4. Discover Card Tribute Awards
5. Echoing Green Fellowships
6. The Heart of America Christopher Reeve Awards
7. Kohl's Kids Who Care Program
8. Samuel Huntington Public Service Awards
9. National Caring Awards
10. Youth Action Net

Top Ten Scholarships that Don't Need an A

1. US Department of Education (Federal Student Aid)
2. AXA Achievement Scholarship Program
3. Horatio Alger Association Scholarships
4. Ayn Rand Institute
5. Girls Going Places Scholarships
6. Holocaust Remembrance Project Essay Contest
7. Americanism Essay Contest
8. AFSA National Scholarship Essay Contest
9. Red Vines Drawing Contest
10. Community Foundation Scholarships

Key Scholarship Resources

Fastweb Free Scholarship Matching Service
www.fastweb.com

FinAid's Scholarships Section
www.finaid.org/scholarships

Search for Scholarships on the Web
www.finaid.org/websearch

Beware of Scholarship Scams
www.finaid.org/scholarshipscams
www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams

Education Tax Benefits
www.finaid.org/taxbenefits
www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p970.pdf

Federal Student Financial Aid
www.fafsa.ed.gov