



# HOW TO APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

## TIPS AND HINTS

- ◆ **Start EARLY!** -Normally applications are available in December or earlier. Begin your scholarship research as soon as possible. The best time is NOW! Waiting too long could result in missed deadlines!
- ◆ **Stack up the small scholarships** - Studies show that families often overlook scholarships that are less than \$500. But, adding up multiple small awards can prove to be a benefit in your scholarship quest. **EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS!**
- ◆ **Never assume** - Even if you do not have straight A's or not great in athletics, do not think that there is nothing available to you. There may be scholarships available based on hobbies, interests, background, financial need, etc. Seek out local and national organizations and associations in your areas of interest to see whether any scholarship opportunities exist.
- ◆ **Check any financial aid office** -The largest amount of financial aid comes from federal, state, and institutional grants and tuition discounts. Your financial aid office can help you find information on available scholarships, grants, and loans according to your needs and background.
- ◆ **Don't get scammed!** -Scholarship scams will charge you a fee to do a scholarship search which you can do yourself for free. Do not pay any fee for any scholarship searches.
- ◆ **Be organized** -Make a LIST of all the documents required for each scholarship you are applying for and keep track to which you are sending it to. Use the **SCHOLARSHIPS APPLICATION CHECKLIST** (see last page) to keep a record of all the scholarships you have considered. You may want to keep a couple of clean copies of the checklist available for future use.
- ◆ **Be smart** -Always **KEEP COPIES OF EVERYTHING** you submit. You may be asked to submit a duplicate of the original document. If any other documents are requested, be sure to submit a copy, not the original.
- ◆ **Be on time** -Be aware of the due dates of each scholarship.
- ◆ **Get Involved!** -By doing a little extra! It is never too late to look good. Volunteering and participating in extracurricular activities may give you the edge over other applicants.
- ◆ **AVOID** the most common mistakes made on college and scholarship applications:
  - ⇒ Not following directions
  - ⇒ Missing the deadline
  - ⇒ Not being legible on your application or sending in a sloppy application
  - ⇒ Forgetting to spell check and to proofread after you spell check
  - ⇒ Not including information such as a transcript or letters of recommendations
  - ⇒ Not answering the specific question or another question asked by the scholarship committee.

## YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

List ALL topics needed to be addressed in your Personal Statement for each of the scholarships you are applying for. These may include, but are not limited to:

- ⇒ Educational Goals – identify your educational goals; explain your *reasons* for pursuing these goals, and your *plans* for reaching these goals
- ⇒ Extracurricular interest/activities – hobbies, clubs, volunteer work, athletics, etc.
- ⇒ Reason(s) why you deserve the scholarship-describe what sets you apart from the other applicants.
- ◆ **Double check** -Scholarship criteria to determine if there are other things that need to be included other than the above or if all these topics need to be addressed.
- ◆ **Find an angle** -If you're like most people, your life story lacks drama, so figuring out a way to make it interesting becomes the big challenge. Finding an angle or a "hook" is vital.
- ◆ **Answer each question being asked** -Most scholarships require you to say why you deserve the scholarship or will ask a specific question. Answer the specific question being asked in your own personal way.
- ◆ **Concentrate on your opening paragraph** -The lead or opening paragraph is generally the most important. It is here that you grab the reader's attention or lose it. This paragraph becomes the framework for the rest of the statement.
- ◆ **Proofread** -Have other people (counselors, teachers, parents, etc) read your personal statement to provide you with constructive criticism to help you revise and improve your statement.
- ◆ **Sell yourself** -The goal of your letter is to convince the scholarship committee to award the scholarship to you and not to someone else. You need to sell yourself to them.
- ◆ **Give yourself lots of time** -while writing your personal statement; you may go through many, many drafts and perhaps totally different versions. Your first few drafts might be awful. That's ok. The important thing is to get your ideas down on paper, then dress them up later.
- ◆ **Show (don't tell) what a great candidate you are** - Use the way you write and the things you write about as a way to show what a great candidate you are. Leave it to your references to praise your gifts as a writer, your dedication to community service, or your passion for research. Your job is to show these things implicitly.

**Once again, please be aware of scholarship scams. Do not pay for any service who claims to help you locate a scholarship because you can do it yourself for free!**

## SECURING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

You will need to check with each scholarship requirement to determine the number of recommendations needed. Generally, most scholarships require a minimum of two (2) letters.

- ⇒ Identify three (3) or four (4) people who know you well and may be willing to write a letter of recommendation for you. Asking professionals or instructors that you may have gotten good grades with but don't necessarily "know" may be more hurtful than helpful. If they can't provide any information in the letter that describes **WHO YOU ARE**, then it will only weaken the scholarship donor's opinion of you.
- ⇒ Make a list of all the scholarships which require letter of recommendations
- ◆ **Personal contact** - An in-person contact gives you the opportunity to make sure the person writing the recommendation has time to write the letter and that the letter will be good. It also makes the request more personal showing that you are willing to make the effort to show you are appreciative of their time. A face-to-face request also allows the instructor or mentor to ask clarifying questions such as what you want them to include in the letter, should they mail out the letter or should it be returned to you and when the deadline for the letter is.
- ◆ **Allow enough time** - Give the letter writer at least 4 weeks' notice before the letter is due. Giving the letter writer ample (a lot) of time will allow them to make several revisions to the letter (most often improving it). If the letter is rushed, it may not have all the things you want them to add in it.
- ◆ **Be Concrete** - If you want the letter writer to say something good about you, make sure they have the information to support it. For example, it's easy to say "Susie is committed to her work" but it will be more effective for the writer to give examples of how she is committed.
- ◆ **Information** - Provide your references with a copy of your personal statement or resume to assist them in writing the recommendation letter for you.
- ◆ **Be thoughtful** -As a courtesy, provide an address and stamped envelope for your references so they can mail the letter immediately.
- ◆ **Be appreciative** -Do not forget to write thank you notes to your references, regardless of whether or not you receive the scholarship(s). This is a common courtesy and it recognizes the fact that your references worked hard to assist you.
- ◆ **Keep in touch** -Be sure to maintain contact with your references. Scholarships may allow you to re-apply for the award the following year and you may want the same reference to write on your behalf again. In the future, provide your references with updated and current information of your activities.

*Good Luck with your scholarship search!*

