

Tips for Current Students in Finding a Scholarship

Start Locally!

You are going to have the greatest success finding scholarships by starting with your parents, your employers, and your local organizations. You also increase your odds of actually winning a scholarship by hitting your local organizations first. You may only be going up against a few other local students, versus the entire student population of the country. When you hear "pay-for-search" scholarship search firms boast about "obscure" scholarships, this is what they are talking about. When you hear things like "75% of all private financial aid went unclaimed last year" they are talking about financial aid offered by employers to their employees most of the time.

Employers. Have your parents ask their personnel administrator if their company offers any sort of financial aid, tuition reimbursement, or scholarships, for employee's children. Most major companies do offer this benefit. If you have a job, ask your own company if they offer this sort of benefit.

Volunteer work. Have you done any volunteer work, perhaps at your local hospital? Do you help out at the food bank? All are excellent sources.

Organizations. What professional or social organizations are you or your parents involved with? 4H, JayCees, Lions Club? Association for Internet Addiction? You name it. If you or your parents are a member of an organization, ask them and see if they offer any kind of scholarships. If you are NOT a member of any organizations, the next thing to check with is organizations that represent what you are planning on studying. Many such organizations offer scholarships to students who are studying what they support, even if you are not a member. For example, the American Medical Record Association offers several scholarships for those planning on making a career in Medical Record Administration, but there is no requirement you be a member. Many organizations that do permit non-members to apply for scholarships, however, do expect you to join the organization after receiving the scholarship.

Unions. Are you or your parents a member of a Union? All the major labor unions offer scholarships for members and their dependent children (AFLCIO, Teamsters, etc.).

Church. Check with your church. Your local parish may or may not have any scholarships for their members, but the Diocese or headquarters may have some available. And if you have been very active in your local church, they may be able to help you in other ways.

Chamber of Commerce. Check with your local Chamber of Commerce. Many offer (usually small, less than \$500) grants to students in the community, especially those planning on careers in Business and Public Service. Even if they do not offer any themselves, you can usually get a listing of members, and many of them may offer small scholarships to local students.

High school. This is really obvious, but surprisingly enough, many students don't bother to check with their High School Guidance Counselors, Principals, Teachers, and other administrators. Many high schools have scholarships specifically for their own students.

The Chairperson or Head of the Department at your school. This is an often overlooked area to find scholarship information. Once you are in school, check with the head of the department you are studying in. They may have information available on scholarships and grants, possibly even internship opportunities that the financial aid office does not have.

The Library. Another really obvious source! Ask the librarian to help you research sources of scholarships.

The Web. But be prepared to spend A LOT of time! Hit the major search engines, and run searches on scholarships, financial aid, organizations, colleges, universities, grants, anything you can think of. On the keyword of "scholarships" expect to find one in thirty hits are for scholarship search services that charge you a fee.

Newspapers. Read your local newspaper every day. Especially during the summer, watch for announcements of local students receiving scholarships. Find out where you can apply for the next year for that same scholarship. Watch also for actual announcements of local firms and organizations offering scholarships. If your local newspaper has a "library" (most do) ask the librarian at the paper to help you find scholarship information posted in the newspaper in past issues. Do not expect to find much information from your local newspaper, but it is another source.

Yellow pages. Find out if any professional or social organizations have a chapter in your city. Call them and find out if they offer any scholarships, both nationally and locally. You may even want to check with major corporations in your area.

More Tips:

- Stay organized and create a separate E-mail account just for your scholarship search.
- Apply fearlessly! The trick to securing scholarships is to apply for as many as you can.
- Develop a personal inventory, take time to brainstorm about some of your attributes. The more personal characteristics you list, the bigger your pool of potential scholarships.
- Make sure you meet all deadlines.
- Start your research today. Some scholarship may have early deadlines.
- If letters of recommendation are required, give you teachers/counselors/employers plenty of time to prepare a letter.
- Keep your profile up to date on scholarship search engines. Even small changes in your GPA can connect you with new scholarships
- Don't disregard smaller scholarships; they can really add up!

Spelling and Neatness Counts! Remember to proofread your applications and essays!