

Tips for High School Students in Finding a Scholarship

It's no secret: college is costly.

A degree will likely be one of the most expensive investments you make in your life. Although the return on your investment is excellent, many degree-seekers are deterred by the price of that diploma. Forging out the thousands of dollars necessary to make your initial payments is certainly a daunting task.

Fortunately, many charitable individuals and institutions make money available to college students to help them pay for tuition, books, fees, rent, etc. Each year hundreds of millions of dollars in scholarship is up for grabs; unfortunately, each year a good portion of that money goes unused.

Here are a few ideas on how to hunt down scholarships:

1. *Talk to guidance counselors* — Your high school or college guidance counselors often know of a variety of different scholarship awards available in your area. Local scholarships generally offer less competition than national scholarships. They are also aware of awards specific to your school.
2. *Search the web* — Many websites like www.fastweb.com, <http://go.salliemae.com/scholarship/>, and http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp offer free scholarship searches. [Many scholarships](#) have odd or quirky requirements: be sure to check out all options.
3. *Be involved* — Be an active volunteer in the community. Many scholarships look for individuals who have a history of service. Groups like the National Honor Society or Key Club look good on a scholarship resume. The groups themselves often offer scholarships to outstanding members. Participating in other extra-curricular activities such as writing for the student newspaper or playing a sport open many doors for scholarships.
4. *Apply for scholarships from your college/major* — Most college departments have different scholarships available for different majors. Check out your college website to find out if there are any scholarships that you qualify for.
5. *Work to keep up your grades* — When it all comes down to it, colleges are much more likely to award scholarships based on GPA and ACT/SAT scores than anything else. Keeping up your grades in high school and later on in college is necessary to keep the money flowing into your account. Make homework a priority.
6. *Make finding a scholarship a part-time job* — Actively pursue scholarships, keeping a list of potential awards you qualify for and due dates. You should be willing to write scholarship essays and fill out a variety of different applications.
7. *Check with employers* — A lot of businesses are willing to help pay employees to go back to school. Check with your supervisor to see what options are available. Many fast food restaurants and chain-retail stores offer scholarships to student employees.
8. *Personal or family circumstances* — Are you a first-generation college student? Do your parents make less than \$25,000 a year? Is English your second language? If you have any of these characteristics, there is probably a scholarship out there waiting for you.
9. *Turn hobbies into money* — Many things you do for fun can be turned into a scholarship check. If you are a skilled duct tape designer, you might be eligible for the [Stuck at Prom](#) scholarship. Creative writers can write their way into a scholarship [from the Alliance of Young Artists and Writers](#). The possibilities are endless.