



Finding College Scholarships

1. Develop a Strategy

Although most student aid comes in the form of federal education loans and grants from colleges, other scholarships get a lot of attention from students and their parents. Free money is popular! If you decide to invest your time in a search for scholarships, it is important to have an organized system to find, apply for, and win scholarship money.

2. Start with a Personal Assessment

Most of the information you will be asked for on a scholarship search questionnaire will be easy to come up with -- year in school, citizenship, state of residence, and so forth.

But you should also give consider your talents and interests as well as your prospective major and career goals. Don't overlook anything. The more noteworthy characteristics you possess, the more scholarships may be suitable for you.

3. Work Hardest on Scholarships You Have the Best Chance of Winning

In general, the smaller the pool of potential applicants, the better your chances of winning. Begin by visiting your high school Guidance Office. Guidance Counselors are your best source for scholarships geared toward local students. They may also be aware of scholarships for residents of your town, county, and state.

Your next stop should be the college aid section of your local library. Most libraries have a number of books about financial aid, including scholarship guides such as the College Board's *Scholarship Handbook*. They also may have information on local scholarships.

Organizations of all types and sizes sponsor scholarships. Explore categories you might not have considered, such as religious, community service, fraternal, military, union, and professional groups. Start with organizations or groups to which you or members of your family belong. Many companies offer scholarships or tuition programs for children of employees. Don't overlook a student's employer. Companies like fast food chains, department stores, and supermarkets often give scholarships. Only after exploring these options should you start looking at other large national scholarships.

4. Use a Free Scholarship Search Service

A scholarship search company collects information on hundreds of awards and compares your student characteristics with scholarship restrictions. Based on your answers to a questionnaire, you will receive a list of possible scholarships. It is up to you to decide to which ones you will apply. You should never have to pay for this type of scholarship information. If you're asked to pay a fee for "exclusive" scholarship leads, there's a good chance your scholarship service is really a scam.

Some free scholarship search services:

[Scholarship Search](http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp) (http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp)

[Fastweb](http://www.fastweb.com/) (<http://www.fastweb.com/>)

[Wiredscholar](http://www.collegeanswer.com/paying/scholarship_search/pay_scholarship_search.jsp) (http://www.collegeanswer.com/paying/scholarship_search/pay_scholarship_search.jsp)

5. Research Institutional Scholarships

Since the vast majority of all scholarship money is disbursed by colleges, it makes sense to research what kinds of scholarships are available at the schools that interest you. Check out college websites, catalogs, and financial aid offices for this information. Institutional awards can be offered on a university-wide basis, or within a particular college or major. Eligibility for such awards may be based on merit, financial need, intended major, ethnicity, or a variety of other factors. Some are even awarded automatically if a student matches certain criteria (such as GPA or SAT score).

6. Scholarship Application Tips

Once you've created a list of scholarships that interest you, check out [How to Apply for a Scholarship](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/8937.html) (<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/8937.html>) for advice on creating a winning application.

