

# TEN TIPS FOR WINNING SCHOLARSHIPS

## 1. START RESEARCHING EARLY

The more time you put into your scholarship search, the more options you may have. Research scholarships at least 18 months prior to the date you require the funds. There are thousands of scholarships publicized through books, local organizations, family and friends, and Internet searches and scholarship guides. Use a reliable search engine, such as those highlighted in Top 10 Scholarship Websites. Review available scholarships carefully to determine if they are a good match with your circumstances and educational goals.

## 2. READ ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS CAREFULLY

Apply only for those scholarships for which you are eligible. If you have any questions about the application or eligibility requirements, contact the sponsor immediately.

## 3. FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY

Provide everything that is required and proofread your submission in its entirety. Do not go over the length limit for an essay or leave any required items blank. Even one mistake could ruin your shot at winning a scholarship. Many applications are lengthy so leave plenty of time to complete the application and meet the scholarship deadline. Carefully typed applications generally make the best impression.

## 4. PREPARE A SCHOLARSHIP RESUME

Some scholarships ask for your resume or CV. Your scholarship resume could also serve as a helpful reference when you fill out applications. Your resume should include work experience, awards, honors, community service, and activities. Review Kaplan Higher Education's Guide to Writing Your Scholarship Resume.

## 5. ARRANGE FOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

These letters should be written by instructors or academic advisors who are familiar not only with your academic abilities but also your personal interests and background. One letter should come from someone who can address your volunteer activities, leadership abilities, and commitment to the community. Schedule a meeting with your recommenders to discuss what you would like to study, why you want to apply for the scholarship, and your goals and plans. Give them plenty of time to write the letter. You should also provide your recommenders with envelopes and postage for mailing, as recommendations must be sent directly to the organization offering the scholarship.

## 6. WRITE A STRONG PERSONAL STATEMENT

Write an essay that makes a strong impression. This is the most important component of your application. It is an opportunity for you to write about yourself. The essay allows the scholarship committee to become acquainted with who you are, what you want to study, and your goals. Ask several people to read and critique a draft of your essay.

## 7. ORGANIZE ALL YOUR SCHOLARSHIP MATERIALS

- » Create a separate file for each scholarship. Make a copy of the entire packet that you mail and place it in the file along with the scholarship information.
- » Keep a calendar of scholarship application deadlines and follow-up appointments.
- » Keep a file of frequently required documents:
  - › Transcripts: Request a copy from each school you have attended
  - › Standardized test scores: If you do not have a copy of your scores, you can request one from the test provider (e.g., the College Board)
  - › Copies of financial aid forms, such as the FAFSA
  - › Financial information, including tax returns

- › One or more essays, including your personal statement
- › One or more letters of recommendation
- › Proof of eligibility (e.g., membership credentials)
- › Professional photo: This could help the scholarship committee put a face to an application

#### **8. ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT**

If you have questions or problems completing the application, ask friends, family, instructors, or advisors for help. Ask them to proofread the entire application before mailing.

#### **9. SEND YOUR APPLICATION PACKET BY REGISTERED MAIL WITH DELIVERY CONFIRMATION**

Make sure your name (and social security number, if applicable) appears on all pages of the application. Know the deadline for each scholarship application you plan on completing and send your application early.

#### **10. REMEMBER THAT A SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR THREE THINGS**

- ›› Why the scholarship is important to you.
- ›› Why the scholarship is right for you.
- ›› Why you are right for the scholarship.

Kaplan Higher Education cannot guarantee that students will be eligible to receive any Kaplan Higher Education or outside scholarships. It is the student's responsibility to carefully review the requirements for any scholarships of interest.

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