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Student Bulletin

Scholarship Guide

Master the Basics

Where to start

- **Go online** and take advantage of free scholarship matching services such as www.fastweb.com for local, regional, state, national awards and college-specific scholarships.
- **Ask** your school guidance counselor about local, private and corporate sponsorships.
- **Search** your community. There are many philanthropic and non-profit organizations that may offer awards. Visit your school or local public library to research scholarships. Ask your parents' employers and unions if they sponsor scholarships for children of employees.

How to prepare

- **Get organized** and keep the scholarships you are working on separate from those you have not started. Use a calendar to keep track of dates and deadlines or the status tool available on Fastweb.
- **Know your time frame to apply**. Complete and submit the easiest scholarships first. Then focus on the scholarships with earlier deadlines and ones that may require more time. Allow plenty of time when requesting letters of recommendation.

Submit your application

- **Remember** to check your spelling and grammar.
- **Proofread your materials** and have a teacher, parent or friend review your application and essay if submitting online or by mail. They can provide feedback and catch mistakes.
- **Keep a copy** of your application, if you submitted paper or electronic copy.

The Scholarship Essay/Application

Before you begin:

- Develop a theme that fits the scholarship. Learn about the scholarship provider's mission and goals. Tailor your essay/application to complement the sponsor's expectations. For example, if the provider is interested in community service, highlight ways you impact your campus community and your community at large within your essay. Here are a few topic ideas:

Personal achievements

- Talk about specific interactions you had with others. Sponsors want to know the impact you had on others and what this says about "you". Do you still keep in touch with anyone you've helped? How did you influence their lives?
- How did your achievements reflect your values? Why are your achievements important to you? Did you do something that received high praise or recognition?
- Personalize your experience. For example, what makes the volunteer and community service you've performed unique? What made you stand out?

Academic plans and possible major

- Instead of saying, "Science is my favorite subject," discuss a *specific* assignment or project that you worked on that sparked your interest. Give examples.
- Avoid saying that you selected a major or career path to "help people." What specific actions can you take to improve the lives of others? Discuss how your values are relevant to what you will be studying in college.

Social issues and current events

- Think about current issues or events in the news that you feel strongly about.
- Do you know a lot about a controversial topic?
- Do you know of someone who is directly involved in an issue who might be able to provide insight?

Mentors, admirers and influences

- Think about your friends and family, community and the things you've learned outside of the classroom. Pick specific people, incidents and learning experiences to write about that will let your personality come through.
- Is there a person you aspire to be like within your chosen academic major or career path? Someone who encouraged you to succeed?
- Focus on specific qualities or actions that the person has inspired in you.

What Do Judges or Evaluators Look For?

Do you qualify? Every year, students waste time by applying for awards they aren't eligible to win. If you don't meet the eligibility criteria, don't enter!

Is your application presented well? Type your essay and check for grammar and spelling errors. Place the application, essay and other contents in a large folder for mailing. Do not fold any of the materials.

Did you include all required documents? Make sure you include all required academic transcripts, references and letters of recommendation. When selecting individuals to provide you a letter of recommendation, be sure you know them very well and give them ample time to provide you a letter and provide them a self addressed stamped envelope, if it will be mailed.

Did you answer all of the questions? Double-check that you haven't forgotten any required information.