

How to Search for Outside Scholarships

When it comes to paying for college, scholarships are one of the best options. Luckily, there are scholarships for nearly everything from being left-handed, to showcasing your talents in athletics, to being top in your class. So, the trick is learning how to narrow your search when using some of the web's scholarship sites. Scholarships are basically free money (and what could be better than that?). When you receive a scholarship, you never have to worry about paying it back.

While the application process can be enough to scare some less-motivated students away, it's really not so bad if you know what you're in for. Whether you're applying for scholarships for the first time as an incoming college freshman or just looking for some extra cash to get you through grad school, here's a step-by-step guide on how to apply for scholarships:

How do I find scholarships?

#1. Get out and search - You can't find what you don't look for, right? So, it should come as no surprise that the first step in this guide on how to apply for scholarships is that you need to go out (or go online) and search for one.

#2. Crate a Calendar - When it comes to how to apply for scholarships, timing is key. It's a good idea to begin applying as soon as possible...those deadlines really sneak up on you! From the start, make a list (whether in an Excel sheet or the vintage way with pen and paper), with the scholarships you would like to apply for, their due dates, and their required documents and essays.

#3. Know the Requirements - Not all scholarships are created equal and it's important to research the specific requirements for the scholarship you're applying to. Luckily, scholarships are generally straightforward so everything you need will be listed out right in the description. (EXAMPLES – essay, letters of recommendation, copies of transcripts/diplomas, financial information, Resume/CV, Portfolio)

#4. Work the Essay - the essay can make or break the application, so it's important to give it the time and effort that it deserves. Even if you're lacking confidence when it comes to your writing skills, following a few simple tips can help take your essay to the next level.

- a. **Read the instructions** - many amazingly written essays get tossed aside simply because the applicant didn't take the time to read the directions and respond properly to the prompt. If you take anything at all from this guide on how to apply for scholarships, do yourself a favor and make sure you understand what you need to do before you pick up the pen.
- b. **Give yourself time** - give yourself sufficient time to write the essay, you'll be less stressed, have more time to think through your ideas, and have more time for proofreading. Rushed essays are more likely to be filled with grammar and spelling errors and usually end up being pretty boring. Plan your time out beforehand.
- c. **Find your own path** - When you apply for a scholarship, you're responding to the same writing prompt as hundreds, or maybe even thousands, of other applicants. How can you make your essay stand out from the rest? What can you bring to it that nobody else can? Set some time aside simply to think over your strengths and to brainstorm ways to make your essay stand out.

- d. **Create an outline** - An outline can help ensure that your essay is fluid and follows a logical sequence of events. Outlines don't always need to be detailed, even just a basic one can help you organize your ideas!
- e. **Jazz it up** - Nobody wants to read a boring, lifeless essay...much less scholarship committees, who are reading hundreds of applications! Don't be afraid to put your personality into your writing and let your passion show through. Big, fancy words aren't necessary and often do more harm than good.
- f. **Proofread, edit, repeat** - Taking five extra minutes to proofread your essay can make a world of difference. We're all human and, whether we like it or not, we all make mistakes. Having the correct spelling and grammar will make your essay appear more professional.

#5. Submit your materials - Some scholarships should be submitted by mail while others are submitted online, so be sure to check the requirements. If you requested any Letters of Recommendation, be sure that the person providing you with the recommendation is aware of the deadline. Also, provide them with either the email address or a stamped envelope with the correct destination address on it.

#6 Wait - The last and final step in our guide on how to apply for scholarships is simply to wait and realistically, there is not much else you can do. Most scholarships will let you know when you can expect to hear back by. Some only contact the recipients. After submitting your application, take a deep breath and relax. Keep a positive attitude and hope that your hard work pays off!

We believe that to use online scholarship search sites, you need to know a lot about yourself in order to successfully search for specific types of outside scholarships that match who you are. Complete the questions below and you should have a good reference sheet to help you search for outside scholarships.

- What is your classification? _____
- Are you a non-traditional student (i.e., adult or returning student)? _____
- When will you use the award (1st year – Graduate School)? _____
- What is your Gender? _____
- What is your State of Residence? _____
- What is your Citizenship (U.S. Citizen, Permanent Resident, Refugee, not a US Citizen)? _____
- What is your Age? _____
- Do you have any Disabilities? _____
- What is your Ethnic Heritage? _____
- What are your Future Goals (Planned major/minor)? _____
- What are your Interests? _____
- What are your activities? _____
- Do you participate in any Athletics/Sports? _____
- What is your Religious Affiliation? _____
- What is your Military Affiliation? _____
- What is your highest ACT/ SAT Scores? _____
- What is your current GPA? _____

See page 3 for some scholarship resources that you may be interested in utilizing.

Below are some scholarship resources that you are encouraged to check out as you investigate additional funding for your academic pursuits.

Scholarship checks received by our office will be divided equally between the fall and spring semesters, unless otherwise indicated in writing by the donor. It's important to notify HSU Financial Aid of any outside scholarships you receive, so the appropriate adjustments can be made.

Scholarship checks should be sent to:

Hardin-Simmons University
Attn: Scholarship Coordinator
2200 Hickory Street
HSU Box 16050
Abilene, TX 79698

The list below can help you start your search for outside scholarships:

- [Bold.org](#)
- [FinAid.org](#)
- [CollegeBoard.com](#)
- [Scholarships.com](#)
- [FastWeb](#)
- [CollegeNet](#)
- [International Student](#) – Scholarships for International Students
- [Study in the USA](#) – Scholarships for International Students
- [Cafecollege](#) – Scholarship resources for immigrant/undocumented students
- [My Documented Life](#) - scholarships and information for undocumented students
- [Careeronestep](#)
- [Scholarship America](#)
- [Scholarshiphunter.com](#)
- [Cappex.com](#)
- [Unigo](#)
- [Discover](#)

Phone Apps:

- Scholarship Owl
- Scholly

We hope that this provides a great starting point for scholarship options.

Students are encouraged to designate at least 2 hours a week to applying for scholarships.