



**Scholarship  
Best  
Practices  
Packet  
2022-23**

## "Thinking Points"

**Time prioritization**- are you committing to focusing your ALL when you make your decision? Is your effort purposeful, a specific goal in mind or general networking?

**Investment**— are you investing in yourself? How? Better grades? Group affiliations? Tapping into resources? Exploring new options (outside the box)? Are you working hard to obtain scholarship funds NOW, in order NOT to pay back loans LATER?

**Outcomes**— short term immediate results or down the line Return On Investment (ROI)?

**Beneficiary**— are you the only one that benefits? Does your immediate family benefit or your surrounding village, your environment? Your institution is your village as well. Your improved quality of life is a benefit to you, your family, Alma Mater and your community. Be responsible!

# Best Practices for Winning a College Scholarship

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**W**inning a college scholarship takes perseverance and hard work, but don't lose heart. You don't have to win a \$10,000 scholarship or get a full ride. A handful of smaller awards can add up nicely too, or at least cover part of your tuition.

# 17 best practices for winning scholarship.

## 1. Learn from other scholarship winners.

Read past winners' stories when they are posted on the donor's website or in the newspaper. Winners often share their struggles or inspirations and how they eventually succeeded. Review other recipients' essays to get insight into the type of essay the donor picks. This is useful if you're applying scholarships from the same donor or organization.

## 2. Keep trying.

If you've applied for scholarships in the past, continue doing so. The odds of winning a scholarship are slim, but the more scholarships you apply for, the better your chances.

## 3. Stay organized.

Use a physical or digital tool to stay organized. Planners, [calendars](#) and binders can help you stay on track. For example, keep your accomplishments, recommendation letters, exemplary essays, and projects in a binder. Use a reminder app or digital calendar to send yourself a reminder when a scholarship deadline is approaching. Online scholarship databases like [Fastweb](#) also come with tools that'll remind you of such deadlines.

If you have a scholarship folder, **use post-its** to remind yourself of missing items before sending off your application. Organize your digital or physical folders by order of deadline, then check off scholarships you've applied for, so you don't apply for them twice. It never hurts to jot down when you send an application. After a week or two, you can check back with the provider to see if they received your application.

## 4. Adhere to scholarship deadlines.

With so many applications coming through, the review board has a limited amount of time to review each one. A missed deadline may mean a denied application. Don't give the board an opportunity to deny your application because it arrived late. If you've already completed your application, but missed the deadline, don't throw away your application. Make a note to try again next year. As long as you still meet the eligibility rules, you can re-apply. Additionally, you may be able to re-submit your application for a different scholarship that the school is offering. Just be sure to verify any information that may have changed before sending it off.

## 5. Get recommendations early.

The earlier you can get your [recommendation letter](#), the better. Give the person who is writing the recommendation plenty of time, so they ask you any questions about the type of recommendation you need and write a glowing letter about you. Typically, a month or two works best. You don't want to have to rush around, asking *Tom, Dick or Harry* for a recommendation. Instead, choose someone who will speak well to the scholarship you're applying for.

## 6. Give yourself plenty of time.

Working ahead is vital when you're applying for scholarships. It gives you time to proofread your application and catch errors you may have otherwise missed. You'll have time to fix unforeseen issues you didn't plan for, like that third recommendation letter the donor wants you to supply, or an earlier deadline than originally planned. You never know what might happen if you wait to the last minute.

## 7. Don't shy away from scholarships with essays.

Many students avoid scholarships that require an essay and search for scholarships that don't. This improves your chances when applying for scholarships with an essay component. So, don't shy away from this unpopular task. Writing an essay just might win you \$5,000!

## 8. Search for scholarships consistently.

When you search for scholarships regularly, you're more likely to find scholarships you qualify for. Applying for these scholarships increases your odds. If you don't have a lot of time to search for scholarships, put online tools to work. You can join multiple scholarship platforms like [Fastweb](#) and [Cappex](#), which are updated regularly and send you new matches to save you additional legwork.

## 9. Apply for scholarships you qualify for.

Some scholarships receive a plethora of applications, making them difficult to win. With the competition already so intense, focus on scholarships that match you best. Include your skills, background, ethnicity, and grades into the scholarship database. You can narrow down your qualifications to your educational level, citizenship status, major, or other characteristics that make you unique.

## 10. Customize your scholarship essay.

You may be tempted to use the same cookie-cutter essay you submitted for another application, but don't. This is not to say you shouldn't [use parts of an essay](#) that apply to another scholarship. In fact, doing so can save you time. Just be careful to follow the instructions exactly and modify your essay accordingly for each essay.

## 11. Double-check your application before submitting.

When you apply for a scholarship, don't just submit it. Quality is vital, regardless of the award's amount. Review it for [grammatical and typographical errors](#). A lot of applications are now available online, but if you're submitting a paper application, write legibly and with care. Follow the instructions completely. Confirm you've included every attachment you were asked to provide. If you're applying for several scholarships, confirm you used the correct organization's name and spelling.

## 12. Apply for local scholarships.

Scholarships from your local municipal, town, city or state are easier to win than national scholarships. This is because the boundaries are smaller and not as saturated. With that said, awards from local scholarships aren't always small. Some of these scholarships are awarded to lots of students in the range of \$500 to \$2,500, making them more attainable. For example, in July 2018, the [City of Boston awarded 30 Boston residents a scholarship of \\$2,500 each](#). Imagine how quickly this adds up if you win the scholarship annually. Add this to other scholarships in your local area, and you're much closer to your goal.

## 13. Start with your school.

Schools are a hidden gem for scholarships. It's easier to qualify for these types of scholarships because less people apply for them. You can start with your high school or college. If you're not in college yet, search for scholarships at your top prospective colleges to see what each [offers](#). The school's website is a great resource for these types of awards. For additional guidance, ask your academic advisor or financial aid office about scholarships you may qualify for. Some advisors can even help with scholarship questions and additional paperwork.

## **14. Use multiple scholarship database search tools.**

Sign up for multiple [scholarship databases like Peterson's](#) to expand your options. If one database doesn't have the scholarships you need, try another. If you don't want to clog up your inbox, create a special email that's dedicated to your scholarship search. When any scholarships you qualify for come through, add them to a folder, and organize them by deadline, priority, award amount, or whatever process works for you. Just remember to check your inbox regularly for new matches.

## **15. Clean up your online and social profile.**

Just like jobs check your digital footprint, schools and scholarship providers do too. It never hurts to check your online reputation even if you're not worried about it. If you or others have posted disparaging comments or photos of you, this can come back to bite you. You can clean up your online presence by re-branding your social identity. Search for your name in different search engines and see what comes up. When possible, ask the webmaster to remove any incorrect information about you. Check your profile on social media sites. You want to remove anything associating you with drugs/drinking, too much partying, profanity, sexually explicit posts, discriminatory comments, bad behavior, and any friends or followers associated with this. Replace this content with a professional head shot, photos of you having good, clean fun with friends and family; your volunteer work or sports activities; comments where you're helping others.

## **16. Research the scholarship provider.**

One of the quickest ways to learn about the donor's passion, heart and mission is to research them. Thankfully, this information is readily available on the donor's website. Review other applicants that the provider has awarded a scholarship. Check the CEO's story. Read the company's history and why it was founded. Check out news stories about their interests and community involvement. Peruse their blog for additional stories that shed more light into their beliefs and culture. Jot these things down. What areas from your research align with yours? Do this, and you'll be miles ahead of the competition when you apply for the provider's scholarship.

## **17. Continue applying for scholarships during college.**

A lot of students stop applying for scholarships once they're in college. I actually didn't start applying for scholarships until I was in college. There are scholarships available for each year of college, even if you're in your senior year. The scholarship application process doesn't have to stop after high school. In fact, some students find it easier to raise their GPA while they're in college. This opens the door to other scholarships within

your college, catered to students with a higher GPA. If you're at a community college, a higher GPA also opens the door to transfer scholarships at other schools. In college, there are multiple clubs you can join as well. Some of these clubs only award scholarships to club members, making these types of scholarships easier to win.