

Scholarship Information for the Beginner

Scholarships are usually awarded based on at least one of the following criteria:

1. **Financial Need** - the amount of money you need based upon your parent's income.
2. **Academic Merit** - based on strength of academics, grades, and test scores.
3. **Special Talents & Conditions** - consider factors such as strength in athletics/music, parent's memberships in civic organizations, religion, and academic majors.

In our office you will find scholarship applications; stop in to check them out because it could mean extra dollars for you! There are also scholarship options through Naviance. The following websites are reputable and helpful on-line sources for scholarship information; www.fastweb.com, www.goingmerry.com, and bigfuture.collegeboard.org. Keep in mind that there are SEVERAL other websites with scholarship searches. You just have to do the research!

BEWARE ... Do not pay for scholarship searches! Keep a sharp lookout! Families in need of scholarship aid are a tempting target for scam artists. Red flags to watch out for include: pressure to commit right away, inappropriate questions about finances, and inappropriate openness about other client's personal business. As you research financial aid, it's important to stay away from companies that promise exclusive information or a scholarship search for a fee, offer awards you never applied for, or ask for a bank or credit card account number to "hold" a scholarship for you. The newest scam is the financial planning "seminar". Students receive a letter inviting them to a free seminar on financial aid. When they arrive, they're hit with a high-pressure sales pitch for costly services. Legitimate sources of aid information can be found on-line for free! The best rule of thumb is...if you're not sure, ask! The counseling office is always available for all of your questions!

TYPES of SCHOLARSHIPS

While you search for funding options, keep an open mind and remember that not all scholarships require top-notch performance in a given area; easy-to-qualify scholarships are out there, too. Many scholarships fall into one of the categories outlined below:

Academic: One of the most common categories of scholarships is those granted to students with strong academic records. These are usually awarded based on a student's grade point average (GPA), overall academic performance, and scores on standardized tests like the ACT and SAT.

Athletic: Student athletes who have performed well in their chosen sport may be eligible for scholarships. In some cases, athletic scholarships can fund a student's entire college career, covering tuition, room, and board for multiple years. Athletic scholarships are available for many sports, from popular ones like football and basketball, to lesser-known sports like lacrosse, archery, and rifle teams.

Demographic: Scholarships may be available for particular demographic groups, like those who are the first in their families to attend college. Other demographic groups can include, but are not limited to, scholarships for students who are Hispanic and Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, black, LGBTQ, women, and/or other minority groups.

Community Involvement: You can also qualify for scholarships because of your commitment to civic engagement or to a particular cause. Students with volunteer experience can be eligible for aid based on their involvement in their school and local community or their dedication to issues with global reach like diversity, inclusion, economic equality, or the environment.

Financial Need: Many scholarships are designed to support students who demonstrate financial need. These scholarships maintain a merit-based approach and are often awarded to students with promising academic abilities, or to students from backgrounds considered disadvantaged (e.g. students who grew up in the foster system or who have experienced homelessness).

Professional Interest: For students who apply to college knowing their particular academic field or career path, field and career-specific scholarships are available. Career-specific scholarships may be offered by companies in that field; for instance, scholarships for engineering students are sometimes offered by engineering firms.

Local Scholarships: Scholarship opportunities can often be found within your local community. Nonprofit organizations, churches, and civic groups sometimes offer scholarships to promising students from the area, particularly if a student has been involved with the group in some way.

Unique Scholarships: Some scholarships are offered based on a whole range of unique criteria. With a little effort, you can find options based on your interests and skills like drawing, collecting particular items, sewing, or playing video games. Some scholarships are even available based on students' diets and heights!



Grants, Loans, & Scholarship Information

Scholarships: Scholarships are funds awarded to students to cover education expenses, including tuition. Like grants, scholarship funds never need to be repaid; however, the full definition of a scholarship includes a couple of key features. For example, most scholarships are merit-based, meaning the recipient is chosen based on their academic abilities and skills. Scholarships are available in a wide range of areas--everything from academic or athletic performance to artistic ability, community service, and demographics like gender and ethnicity. Many types of organizations offer scholarships, too; for instance, along with colleges and universities, private businesses, community organizations, and individuals can sponsor scholarships. The funds awarded can range from under \$100 to tens of thousands of dollars, enough to cover a sizeable chunk of tuition, fees, and room and board.

Grants: Like scholarships, grants are funds that do not need to be repaid. Grants are typically offered by government entities, foundations, or businesses; they're usually awarded based on financial need. Federal Pell Grants are a well-known example of this type of funding source. Pell Grants are awarded based on the cost of the student's educational program and how much a student's family can contribute.

Loans: Loans are funds from government organizations and private entities like banks that must be repaid along with interest. To pay for a college education, both parents and students may take out loans. Money loaned typically must be repaid according to a set schedule, and the specific terms are established by the lender. To be eligible for a loan, a student's parents usually need good credit scores and reliable sources of income.

How to Find Scholarships

With so many options out there, you may wonder what the best way is to identify scholarships that are a good fit for you. For high school students, a visit with your guidance counselor is an effective way to start researching scholarships.

Once you've narrowed down your options for which college to attend, make sure you investigate any specific scholarships those schools offer. You will also want to think about any community connections that may help in your search. For example, does a family member's employer offer scholarships? Are there any community organizations that support students? One of the most important strategies for finding scholarship opportunities is to devote sufficient time to the process. Plan to search using a variety of resources and remember: it's never too early to begin looking for scholarships.

Preparing & Paying for College

Some helpful links:

- ◆ www.studentaid.ed.gov - The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is a comprehensive financial aid site that is maintained by the federal government for students and parents. It is the most vital step in applying for federal grants, work-study, and loans for college.
- ◆ www.hesc.com - the New York state site to help students plan for college and careers, get financial aid information, and learn about grants, scholarships and loans.
- ◆ www.finaid.org - offers information about many college financing opportunities.
- ◆ www.mappingyourfuture.org - Free resource for career, college, financial aid and money management information.

