

SCHOLARSHIPS

Grants vs Scholarships - What's the Difference?

Both grants and scholarships are forms of "gift aid" – financial awards that don't need to be repaid. However, there are key differences between the two. Grants are typically need-based, awarded based on a student's financial circumstances. Examples include federal Pell Grants for low-income students. Grants may be awarded by federal or state governments or individual colleges. Scholarships, on the other hand, are often merit-based and awarded for achievements in academics, athletics, or specific talents. Although some scholarships may also consider financial need, merit is generally a primary factor. Private scholarships are commonly provided by foundations, nonprofits, corporations, or individual donors.

How do I Find Scholarships?

Many colleges offer merit scholarships in addition to need-based financial aid. Be sure to review the websites of the schools you're interested in to see if they offer merit-based scholarships. Each school will have its own requirements, deadlines, and processes, so read the details carefully.

National scholarships are also available and listed on reputable scholarship databases. Here are some sites to explore:

- [Scholarships.com](https://www.scholarships.com)
- [Going Merry](https://www.goingmerry.com)
- [Big Future](https://www.bigfuture.com)
- [Fast Web](https://www.fastweb.com)
- [Scholly](https://www.scholly.com)
- [Niche](https://www.niche.com)

You will also find scholarships listed on Naviance under the "Scholarship" tab along the top of the homepage.

How Do I Apply for Scholarships?

Each scholarship has its own application process, so review each opportunity's requirements. Here are common steps:

1. Confirm eligibility.
2. File the FAFSA – some scholarships require a FAFSA submission, even if you don't qualify for need-based aid.
3. Complete application materials, which may include an essay, video, transcript, test scores, or letters of recommendation.
4. Submit by the deadline.

When Should I Apply for Scholarships?

While many students apply for scholarships during their senior year, you can begin your search as early as freshman year. Scholarship databases allow you to set up a profile, which can be updated each year with new information. The earlier you start, the better your chances of finding opportunities that suit you. Remember: apply by each scholarship's posted deadline. It's never too late to start!