



Ohio Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Scholarship Search Strategies

Develop a Plan

Most student aid comes in the form of federal education loans and grants from colleges. However, scholarships — which don't have to be paid back — get a huge amount of attention from students and their families. If you decide to invest your time in a search for scholarships, it's important to have an organized system to find, apply for, and win scholarship money. It's also best to start early.

Start With a Personal Inventory

Most of the information you are asked for on a scholarship search questionnaire is easy to come up with — year in school, citizenship, state of residence, religion, ethnic background, disability, military status, employer and membership organizations.

Beyond those questions, you have to give some thought to your academic, extracurricular and career plans. You should ask yourself:

- Do I want to participate in a competition? If so, what are my talents and interests?
- What subject do I plan to major in?
- What career do I plan to pursue?
- Do I want to apply for all types of aid or only scholarships?

Your answers to these questions help determine your scholarship eligibility. Take your time brainstorming and don't overlook anything — the more personal characteristics you discover, the more scholarships you could potentially apply for.

Research Local Scholarships First

Begin with your high school counseling office. Your counselors know about scholarships for students graduating from your high school. They may also be aware of scholarships for residents of your town, county and state.

Your next stop should be the college aid section of your public library. Most libraries have a number of books about financial aid, including scholarship guides such as our [Scholarship Handbook](#). They also may have information on local scholarships.

Then it's time to start looking at national scholarships such as those sponsored by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, Gates Millennium Scholars, Intel Science Talent Search, the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation and the Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program. You can also learn more about the [scholarship competitions we cosponsor in science, math and technology](#). Use your library, or check online.

Check Membership Organizations and Employers

Organizations of all types and sizes sponsor scholarships — leave no stone unturned. Explore categories you might not have considered, such as religious, community service, fraternal, military, union and professional.

And don't forget your parents. Many large companies offer scholarships or tuition programs for children of employees. If you are uncertain, ask your parents to check with their human resources departments.

Don't overlook student jobs. Employers such as fast food chains, department stores and supermarkets often give scholarships. Awards related to student employment can come from unexpected sources. For example, there are a number of scholarships for golf caddies.

Use a Free Scholarship Search Service

A scholarship search company collects information on hundreds of awards and compares your student characteristics with scholarship restrictions. Based on your answers to a questionnaire, you receive a list of possible scholarships. It is up to you to decide which ones to try for.

You should never have to pay for scholarship information. If you're asked to pay a fee for "exclusive" scholarship leads, there's a good chance your scholarship service is really a [scholarship scam](#).

Free scholarship search services

[Scholarship Search](#)
[Fastweb](#)
[Sallie Mae](#)

Student Scholarship Websites

<http://www.college-scholarships.com>

<http://www.fastweb.com>

<http://www.collegenet.com>

<http://www.srnexpress.com>

<http://www.collegeanswer.com>

<http://www.collegeboard.com/?student>

<http://www.finaid.org>

<http://www.freschinfo.com>

<http://www.uncf.org>

http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/dollars/tools/scholarship_search.htm

<http://www.ncaa.org>

<http://www.regents.state.oh.us/sgs/>

<http://www.scholarships.com/>

<https://www.coca-colascholars.org/cokeWeb/jsp/scholars/Index.jsp>

http://www.rotary.org/foundation/educational/amb_scho/

<http://www.gmsp.org/>

<http://www.brokescholar.com/>

Contact Your State Department of Higher Education

Almost every state has a scholarship program for residents — the awards are usually limited to students who attend college in-state. For example, the State of Florida offers [Bright Futures Scholarships](#) to qualified Floridians who decide to attend in-state colleges and universities. One of New York State's programs, the Tuition Assistance Program, offers grants to qualified New Yorkers who attend in-state colleges and universities.

Research Institutional Scholarships

Since the vast majority of all scholarship money is disbursed by colleges, it makes sense to research what kinds of scholarships are available at the colleges that interest you. Check out college websites, catalogs and financial aid offices for this information. Institutional awards can be offered on a university-wide basis, or within a particular college or major. Eligibility for such awards can be based on merit, financial need, intended major, ethnicity or a variety of other factors. Here are some questions you might want to ask about these awards:

- Are scholarships awarded automatically if a student matches certain criteria, such as grade point average (GPA) or SAT® score?
- What is the application procedure? What materials are required?
- Is the award renewable? What are the requirements to maintain the award?

Scholarship Application Tips

Once you've created a list of scholarships that interest you, find advice on how to create a winning application.