



# Scholarship Action Plan for High School Students

Scholarships are free money that you don't have to repay when you graduate from college. By earning scholarships, you can reduce the amount of money that you will need to borrow. A few hours spent filling out scholarship applications could save you thousands of \$. Think of it as a job with great wages!

## My Scholarship Action Plan

### Scholarship Search Do's

**Start NOW!** on your scholarship search.

**List and track scholarships and their deadlines.** You may have to apply a year ahead of time!

**Look locally 1st!** - Less people apply for local than for national scholarships, so your chances for success are greater!

**Update your resume!** Include academic accomplishments, awards, activities, and jobs you've held.

**Start early** on your personal statement/ essay. Then: **Revise! Revise! Revise!**

**Build/maintain relationships** with people who can write recommendation letters for you.

### About Letters of Recommendation

**Ask early!** Most people need at least 3 weeks' notice so that they will have enough time to craft a well-written letter.

**Ask the right person** – someone who actually knows about your skills, unique qualities, and contributions! Ask a teacher, TRIO advisor, coach, counselor, pastor, or employer; Do not ask a family member.

**Give your reference information** about the scholarship so he/she knows what the scholarship committee is looking for.

**Remind your reference about you!** Provide a copy of your scholarship resume and any other information that highlights how you fit the scholarship .

**Make sure your references know the due date and follow-up with them** to make sure the letters have been sent.

**Say "thank-you";** Send your reference a personal note or email!

### Use the following list to check your progress:

- \_\_\_ I have requested information about available scholarships from the colleges/universities in which I am interested.
- \_\_\_ I have asked TRIO professionals, advisors, counselors and teachers about scholarship opportunities.
- \_\_\_ I have asked whether my employer or my parents'/guardians' employer(s) offer scholarships for which I may apply.
- \_\_\_ I have check local community organizations such as Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.
- \_\_\_ I have inquired at my place of worship, clubs, banks, credit union, etc. to find out what scholarships may be offered.
- \_\_\_ I have asked friends, family, coworkers, and acquaintances about scholarship opportunities.
- \_\_\_ I have searched online for scholarships (**Fastweb, College Board, CollegeNet, College View**).
- \_\_\_ I have filled out and submitted the FAFSA .
- \_\_\_ My parents/guardians have filled out and submitted their portion of the FAFSA.
- \_\_\_ I have updated my college/scholarship resume.
- \_\_\_ I have at least one draft of a personal statement that can be adapted to the requirements of individual scholarships.
- \_\_\_ I have a list of potential references and their contact information.
- \_\_\_ I have asked each if I may contact them to request their support for individual scholarship opportunities.

**Tip:**  
Organize your materials and online files so you can easily find and use them!



### Beware of Scholarship Scams!

**Never** provide your social security number, bank account information, or credit card number to apply for a scholarship.



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# Write A Winning Scholarship Essay



A scholarship essay is really a personal statement about your experiences, abilities, goals, dreams, and values. Family, friends and teachers may provide helpful suggestions but only YOU can tell YOUR story. Scholarship essays are limited in length so you must choose what is most important to talk about. Avoid the temptation to write your essay as a timeline of events. Instead, quickly narrow your focus on one or two narrative moments that demonstrate your qualities and help the readers understand how your experience has changed you and affected your plans for the future.

## Before Starting to Write

- Is your resume up-to-date? Your list of accomplishments, strengths, and interests should include:

\_\_\_academic achievements \_\_\_athletic/artistic involvement and recognition \_\_\_school/community involvement  
\_\_\_work/volunteer experience \_\_\_skills/personal interests \_\_\_positive personal characteristics

Make notes about what you learned from your experiences at school, in activities, at work, volunteering, etc. Identify and make notes about powerful moments that have helped shape your beliefs, hopes, and dreams.

- List your career and educational goals:

\_\_\_Degree(s) you plan to earn: What inspired you to want to choose this degree/field of study?  
\_\_\_Type of career you want: What inspired you to want to choose this career path?  
\_\_\_How do you plan use these experiences to make your community/the world a better place?

- Make a list of challenges (big or small) you've encountered in your life and how you overcame them. How did you grow or change as a result?

- Some scholarships are based on financial need. If so, then your essay must talk about how and why it is difficult for you to afford an education. How are you trying to make this situation better? How will scholarships help you overcome the financial burden of college education and help you achieve your goals?
- Some scholarships are for first-generation college students. Readers will want to know what being a first-generation college student means to you. What is hard about it? Why is it important? How will success in college make a difference in your life and the lives of those you care about?
- Some scholarships are awarded based on a student's achievements or commitments in academics, sports, leadership activities, civic engagement, career related activities, etc. Focus your essay on your related experiences and successes, the effort you invested, and what you learned as a result! Remember that readers know you are starting out in your life; use your experiences to date to show how you will use this award to build on those achievements.

## Essay Writing Do's

- For each scholarship or application essay:
  - Read and **follow the instructions** carefully!
  - Answer specific questions** the essay prompt may ask.
  - Follow the word limit.**
  - Know what the provider is looking for.
- **Grab the reader's attention!** Develop a compelling 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph that entices the reader to find out what else you will say! Don't be afraid to ask for help with this!
- Clearly describe **how you fit specific requirements** of the scholarship.
- Include **your career/educational goals**; describe skills you've gained through related work or volunteer experience.
- **Check for errors!** You want to avoid spelling and grammar mistakes!
- **Take a break!** Breaks help your mind clear so you can see additional errors and new possibilities.
- Then - **Reread! Revise!** Did you clearly respond to the prompt? Will the reader understand what you wanted to say?
- **Have someone review your essay** and provide advice - a TRIO advisor, teacher, or counselor. Then revise again!
- **Recycle your essays** for more than one application, saving each version with a different document name. Be sure to take the time to **adjust each one to fit that scholarship's specific prompts and guidelines.**
- Take a moment to **celebrate your work!** You can always add to it or change it in the future!

## Outlining/Mapping Can Help!

- A powerful introduction shares the "big" idea.
- Every paragraph uniquely expands the "big" idea.
- Paragraphs are organized to lead the reader to a summarizing concluding paragraph.