

10 TIPS for SCHOLARSHIPS

Winning a scholarship isn't easy. Scholarship providers can get hundreds or even thousands of applications each year, but have only a handful of scholarships to award. This means you have to work even harder than usual. That's why we want you to be prepared when completing your application, so listen carefully. Here's a list of common do's and don'ts that applicants make when submitting an application.

DO'S

- 1. Apply only if you are eligible.** Make sure you apply for all of which you are eligible, but make sure you read all the scholarship requirements and directions carefully. Each scholarship has different requirements.
- 2. Follow the instructions.** Provide everything that's required, but don't supply things that aren't requested. We recommend you contact the scholarship office if you have any questions about the instructions. If it seems unclear, call, don't assume. Following the instructions is one of the most basic criteria used by selection committees to cull applicants.
- 3. Complete the application in full.** If a question doesn't apply, note that on the application. Don't just leave a blank, supply all the information requested. This includes additional supporting material, such as transcripts, letters of recommendation and essays, if applicable. It's imperative you provide the correct support materials in the correct format to be considered.
- 4. Neatness counts.** Always try to type your application. If you can't, that's ok too, just print neatly and legibly in ink. Make several photocopies of the application form before you fill it out. Use the copies as a working draft while you develop your masterpiece, Picasso.
- 5. Write an essay that makes a strong impression.** Even the simplest experience can be monumental. Remember, the key to writing a strong essay is to be personal and specific. Include concrete details to make your experience come alive.
- 6. Watch for deadlines.** To help keep yourself on track, impose your own deadline that is at least two weeks prior to the official deadline. This allows you plenty of time in case a problem occurs. Don't rely on extensions – very few scholarship providers allow them.
- 7. Make sure your application gets where it needs to go.** We suggest you double check the mailing address and send your application through certified mail to ensure it is received on time and in good condition. The earlier we receive your paperwork, the better we are able to assist you.
- 8. Keep a back-up file in case anything goes wrong.** Before sending the application, make a copy of the entire packet. If your application goes astray, you'll be able to reproduce it quickly. Be prepared!
- 9. Give it a final "once-over."** Proofread the entire application carefully. Be on the lookout for misspelled words or grammatical errors. Ask a friend, teacher or parent to proofread it as well. Do everything you can to make sure your application is perfect!
- 10. Ask for help if you need it.** If you have problems completing the application, don't hesitate to call us. We love to hear from you!

APPLICATION FAUX PAS

Some of the most common mistakes are made because applicants did not follow the instructions. So make sure you don't miss out due to one of these common errors:

Not reading requirements. The most common mistake we get is when an applicant submits an application from our website and does not include the support documentation described in the guidelines. Make sure and read through the criteria, do your research. No support documentation, no scholarship! It's that simple.

See attached. Second most common mistake: the application instructions say, "Complete the application in the spaces provided, additional attachments will not be accepted." We understand you have an impressive activity and awards list; however, limit yourself to the space provided. If you're having a hard time deciding what to include, give us a call.

Incomplete applications. Make sure you include all required references, transcripts and/or essays. If your reference provider prefers to send their letter directly to us, it's ok, just make sure their mailing to the correct address. Then call ahead and give us a warning. We can't all have ESP.

Deadlines are no joke! Absolutely no exceptions. Rules...rules...rules!

More isn't always better. The scholarship selection committee has very specifically outlined what is required of all applicants, including limitations on essays, references, etc. Don't submit inappropriate supporting documentation. Stay within the limits.

Illegible applications. Be careful when using fancy, hard-to-read typefaces on your application and essay. Or handwriting even your doctor would be ashamed of.

Spelling errors! Remember, to take the time to spell-check your application!

Mr. Clean. You may not even know about problems that occur with the shipment of your application. For instance, we've received applications that look like they were used as sweepers or squeegees. We suggest a waterproof envelope of some sort; it pays to waterproof!

Postage blunders. Sending your application with "postage due" is definitely a big Oops! But also make sure when mailing the envelope, don't forget to put the application and all support documentation in it. Surprisingly common mistake!