

## Scholarship Guidelines and Tips (Source unknown)

*The following suggestions will help you more efficiently and effectively apply for scholarships.*

- **Scholarship information** is available through the links on web-sites and many other Internet sources.
- **Use Search Engines.** Look under key words such as: Scholarships, Funding etc.
- **Your College Financial Aid Office, local public or school library** should have other scholarship resources. Large bookstores can also be a great source for books on college funding.
- **There are many scholarship opportunities available. Never limit yourself to applying to just one.** Research as many funding sources as you can, learn which ones you may qualify for, and then apply promptly each new school year.
- **Many scholarships have similar criteria for their awards.** By maintaining a high Grade Point Average, staying as active as possible in your community and extracurricular activities, evaluating and cataloging your personal/professional strengths, and setting future goals for your education and career, you will be ready with the necessary information and experience to apply for need and/or merit based funding.
- **Each Scholarship Fund has its own specific guidelines.** Before applying for a scholarship, be certain that you meet, or will meet, all the necessary qualifications such as: academic standing, specified financial situation, and personal or professional background.
- **Once you are certain that you meet the qualifications to apply,** be careful with the application process by clearly expressing and explaining all your qualifying factors.
- **Ask for assistance!** Many terms and words used in higher education and financial aid are unfamiliar and can be confusing. It is always a good idea to ask for the assistance of a school advisor, counselor, or professors, when applying for a scholarship. Your Registrar's or Financial Aid Office can also help.
- **Start to build a network of professionals and educators** who are willing to advise you, write recommendations, proofread your applications and essays, and guide you through the application process.

### *The Competitive Process:*

- **Remember that not all students** who apply for funding are awarded a scholarship. This means it is a competitive process, and alertness, caution, and care must be taken when applying to give yourself the best possible advantage.
- **If you were not selected in past years,** re-evaluate your qualifications and application package. Be certain that you make academic progress in the next term, earn the highest GPA possible, and make any necessary adjustments in your application process. Then reapply the next year.
- **Do not assume that because you have received a scholarship previously, that you will automatically receive another award.** Some students make the error of assuming that they will not have to be as careful filling out their application package and writing their personal statement when applying the second or even third time around.
- **Be aware that there are new students competing for scholarships.** You must present a high quality package each year to be awarded another scholarship.

### *Your application:*

- **Have at least one other person review your application package,** and supporting documents, including your Personal Statement. Find the most qualified person to proofread for you. Some schools offer free tutoring. Or you may have an instructor, or school administrator who could help you.
- **Proofread your application.** Pay particular attention to any spaces you have left blank. Blank spaces can make your application incomplete and ineligible. If the answer is zero, write in 0 rather than leaving a blank spot.
- **Your application represents the entire and only picture that a selection committee has of you.** Always type or neatly print information in black ink. Make sure your application appears professional.

Applications may be considered incomplete and ineligible when students have "second guessed" the application and decided for themselves which questions apply to their situation. If you write N/A (Not Applicable or Not Available) as an answer you risk eliminating yourself for the selection process. Simply answer all questions to the best of your knowledge. Also double check if you answered every question exactly as it was asked.

- **Only answer what is asked.** Volunteering unneeded information could actually affect your evaluation negatively!
- **Re-read your work and ask:** "Would I give an award to this person, if all I knew about the person was in this envelope?"

#### *Your Personal Statement:*

- **Be aware that your Personal Statement is viewed as the equivalent to a face-to-face interview.** Part of your proofreading should include attention to the tone of your statement. Do you sound like a student that the Scholarship Fund (or donor organization) would be proud to call upon to represent them? Take pride in your life and work. The way you phrase your statement can have a positive influence on the selection committee members.
- **Make absolutely certain that all requested topics are covered in your personal statement, completely and in detail.** Use specific examples whenever possible.
- **An "outline format" can be helpful.** Address each point one by one. Anything you do to make your materials easier to read and understand will aid selection committee members in evaluating your package.

#### *Your Reference Letter:*

- **Find a school official or teacher who will write a great recommendation for you and give them advance notice whenever possible.**
- **Ask that the reference letter be written on official school letterhead stationery,** unless a specific reference form is provided with the application material.
- **Be sure to supply the person writing your letter all the information they will need to write an accurate letter.** Provide him or her with the instructions and topics from the application form.
- **Chances are that the person you are asking to write your reference letter is very busy.** Be clear and efficient when making your request.
- **Review the letter if the application process allows it.** Did the writer cover all the points asked for in the application instructions? Is it complimentary and positive? If you are not satisfied with the letter, you may try to find another qualified person, provided that you have left yourself enough time to do so.
- **Some applications require that you waive your right to read reference forms or letters.** The person writing your reference should then be provided with the address where the letter must be sent.
- **A word of caution regarding reference letters:** make certain that the letter is written specifically for and about you since "canned" or template letters can be easily detected.
- **Show your appreciation and professionalism** by writing a note of thanks to the person who took time to write your letter.

#### *Specific Information for Scholarship Applications:*

- **Make sure you have all the pages** of the application, including instructions.
- **Mail all items in one package** to ensure that your application materials are received in time.
- **Submit all documents on white 8-1/2" x 11" paper.** (Except transcripts & Letters on letterhead)
- **Do not use staples** in any materials you send. Staples delay processing.
- **Do not send any extra materials** or any materials you wish to have returned to you.
- **Do not use plastic binders or sheet covers** with your package.
- **Sign your application form.** Unsigned applications become ineligible.