

Scholarship Tips

How to Find Scholarships:

If you're going to be intentional about applying for scholarship, you'll have to decide which scholarships to apply for first. Thousands of local, state and national scholarships are available – and you may qualify for many of them. Here are a few places to look:

- **ScholarshipQuest** features over 2,000 Nebraska-based scholarships. After you create a profile, you'll be matched with scholarships that fit your criteria.
- **National search sites** such as:
 - [College Board](#)
 - [Peterson's](#)
 - [Cappex](#)
 - [Good Call](#)
 - [SuperCollege.com](#)
 - [COLLEGEdata](#)
 - [Chegg](#)
- **Other resources** could include your coach, clubs and organizations, and your parents' employers and community organizations.

Scholarships can be based on academics, community service, school involvement, or a talent. Some (not all) are based on financial need as measured by the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Therefore, to earn scholarships, earn good grades, get involved in your school and community, and complete the FAFSA.

Tips on Applying for Scholarships:

Scholarship applications can become a lot easier with a little extra work upfront.

- **Get organized.** Organize scholarships in deadline order and set aside time each week to work on them.
- **Focus on local scholarships.** You're more likely to earn them over large national awards. BCHS's scholarship application is accepted in March. Write this in your calendar so you don't forget!
- **Track extracurricular activities.** On most applications, you will list your activities, awards, honors classes and volunteer or paid jobs. Having a list to reference will save you time and hassle looking up dates and details each time you apply for a scholarship.
- **If an application requires a letter of recommendation,** give the person writing the letter plenty of notice (ideally a minimum of two weeks), a specific deadline, and a list of your accomplishments and activities.
- **After writing an essay,** ask the Writing Center to review it.
- **Don't ever pay for scholarship services!**
- **Create a checklist of eligibility requirements** and the scholarship application instructions. If you aren't thorough or miss a step (or turn in past the deadline), your scholarship won't be considered.
- **Make a scholarship calendar.** Start off by marking all the due dates for each scholarship. Also note how to submit each application so that you don't accidentally email an application when you're supposed to mail it. If you write it all down in advance and stick to the schedule, you'll never be scrambling to finish your applications last minute.
- **Make Photocopies** before submitting your application so that you can reference it later.

Scholarship Essay Tips:

It's easy to procrastinate on the essay portion of the application. Keeping a checklist and scholarship calendar will help you stay on track. Why do we procrastinate on scholarship essays? Because it's one of the most time-consuming parts of any scholarship application! Many essay prompts are similar, so you should be able to reuse some ideas. Be sure to write a new essay every time though—scholarship review committees value tailored essays over generic ones.

At the core of successful essays is *meaning*, not lists of activities and endless accomplishments. Remember: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

- **Make templates.** Now that you have some essay prompts in mind, write a short (300-500 word) essay on a couple common topics. Write about your goals during and after college, write about someone who inspires you, and write about some of your accomplishments. If you have some of this information down in advance, it will be a lot easier to pull an essay together for a scholarship application.
- **Customize responses for each application.** It's extremely unlikely that your sample essays will perfectly match a given essay prompt on a scholarship application. So what was the point of the templates? Once you find some scholarships that you want to apply for, read the essay prompt carefully and consider what elements of your templates may fit this question. Unfortunately, your templates may not match at all and you may have to start from scratch, but often you will be able to find sections or ideas of your templates that can be incorporated into a specific scholarship essay. Keep all the scholarship essays that you write to increase your 'template pool.'
- **Tell a clear and concise story.** Scholarship essays can be as short as 200 words or as long as 1,000 words (or more!) depending on the scholarship application. It is important to follow the word or page limit set in the instructions. Keep in mind, your scholarship essay can be excellent and still not answer the question. Be sure to answer the question!! Your essays are a chance for the scholarship committee to get to know you, so be sure to paint a clear and interesting picture of yourself. Does your essay attempt to share your entire life story or, in best case scenario, your high school career? If yes, it's time to revise and narrow the ground you will cover. If we compare life to the proportion of a cake, only give the reader a thin slice. Instead of talking about all the sports you participated in, write about when you were captain of the basketball team and had to convince the other players to extend practice by one hour. See the difference?
- **Be specific and avoid generalities. Ask yourself:** Could someone else write this story? If yes, it's time to rethink what you will share with the selection committee. Many of the essays I read don't get beyond this point. Making your essay unique and compelling (especially in the first few sentences) is key!
- **Watch for grammar and spelling errors.** Use the Writing Center for proofreading.
- **Tell a compelling story with a casual tone.** Most essay prompts are crafted to allow the selection committee to learn more about you, so write in your voice – first person. Rarely will these essays demand that you use your extremely "academic" and "researcher" voice.