

A STRATEGY FOR APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Some people will not even apply for a scholarship, even if they are obviously eligible, because they feel it is just too much work. But, for a couple of hours work you could earn \$100, \$500, \$1,000, or even more. Those are pretty good wages where this writer comes from.

Here is what the College Board suggests about applying for scholarships:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/8937.html>

VUB's ADVICE

Create A file

- Your first step is to collect information and record it. Once you have the information on file you may be able to use it for several scholarships. Without creating a file of this information you will have to research the information over and over again, causing the process to be longer than it has to be.
 - Your file should include:
 - A comprehensive list of school activities, even if you have been out of school for many years: List the name of the activity, the organization it represents and the dates you were involved. Also list any elected office you might have held.
 - A comprehensive list of community activities: List the name of the activity, the organization it represents and the dates you were involved. Again, if you held an office or ran an activity be sure to list it.
 - A list of the honors and awards you have received. Include the name of the sponsor and the purpose of the award or honor. Include the date of the award.
 - Include a copy of each of your school transcripts up to that point. Also, list your school's address so you can quickly contact them if an "Official" transcript is required instead of your copy.
 - Have a list of people and their contact information to access if you are required to provide references or to get letters of recommendation.
 - Have a good color photograph (head and shoulders) in case a photo is required.

Research the Scholarships

- Apply only for scholarships that you are eligible for. Many scholarships have qualifiers that might eliminate you so do not waste time on them.

Follow Instructions to the letter

- You may be judged on what you include and how closely you followed the instructions. A simple omission of a document can disqualify you so double check everything before submitting your application.
- Following hand-in-hand with the instructions is appearance. Type everything on a computer and make sure there are no errors. Have someone proofread everything. Use standard fonts and do not get fancy with clip art. Never submit things in hand written form.

The Essay

- Many scholarships require a writing sample. They may give you the title and tell you specifics. Do not try to bluff your way through. Do not start talking about the subject and change after a paragraph to try to sound better. Just write about what the requirements say.
- Be clear and avoid using abbreviations that are only understood by only a few people. Spell out acronyms. (VUB = Veterans Upward Bound)
- Stick closely to the word count if one is noted and never go over the count.
- If you are not told instructions about spacing. Use a standard 1 inch margin all around the page and double space. Avoid bold print except perhaps in the title.
- Some essays might work for other scholarships with just a few edits so whatever you write for one scholarship, keep a copy for future reference or use.
- Create a header and a footer for each essay. The header should include the title of the essay and your name as the author. The footer should include contact information about you. The idea is not to give the committee a chance to lose a page because there is no identification on it.

Complete An Application Form

- Every question on the application form has a purpose. You should never skip a question. Blanks on the form can cause you to be eliminated from consideration.
- If a form is required you might have to use it and may not be able to answer it on a computer. If so. Use dark ink and avoid errors and "white-out". Strive for neatness.
- A signature is probably required so be prepared to sign the form.

Cover letter

It cannot hurt your chances so consider sending a cover letter with the application. You can thank the committee for the opportunity to apply and you can summarize what you have included. IF you feel you have some special circumstance, mention it in a brief paragraph but do not write a second essay in the letter about it.

Copy All Work

After you are done filling out the application and are ready to send the materials in, first make a copy for you to keep.

Submitting the work

- Do not wait for the deadline. A deadline is the absolute last day submissions will be accepted. Submit before the deadline, bearing in mind mail delivery time. Know if the deadline is a receipt date or a post mark date.
- It is appropriate to call in a couple of days and confirm the materials arrived.

After the Application

Many scholarships committees will list the date a decision will be made. Even if they do not, be patient. Your application may be in the process for several weeks or months before they choose a winner.

Afterward

Some scholarships are renewable or may be competed for a second time. Once your application is evaluated and you are chosen, or denied, follow-up with a thank you for the opportunity. Leave the committee feeling you are appreciative and perhaps it will strengthen your application for some other scholarship.