

SCHOLARSHIP TIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Tip #1:

When it comes to applying to colleges, the process is often about “match.” The same holds true for scholarships. For example, a student who has little community service should not apply for a scholarship that places great weight on volunteerism.

Tip #2

Proofread. Proofread. Proofread. Ask your mother, father, or neighborhood grammarian to proofread. Applications with several errors or that are sloppy are often not considered or they fall to the bottom of the pile.

Tip #3

Look at previous winners of scholarships for which you are applying. Were they National Merit Finalists or Scholars? Were they near or at the top of their classes? Were they athletes? What kind of profile did they have? If you have a similar profile, that scholarship may be a good match for you.

Tip #4

Know your odds. For national scholarships, thousands of students will be applying whereas for local scholarships, only local students may apply. Prioritize and use your time wisely for the “best bets.” It is also good to look ahead to scholarships. For instance, if there is a scholarship that you think you might be a good match for, look at the application to see what information is requested ahead of time. Nothing is worse than looking like you did an activity at the last minute just so you could list something on the application.

Tip #5

Yawn. That’s what a reader may do after looking at hundreds of applications. What makes your application stand out? Did your essay have “life” in it so that it was memorable? On the other hand, you do not need to attach a bribe or something not asked for (such as a gift certificate or your elementary school art project) to your application.

Tip #6

Know who really likes you. It is one thing to ask your favorite teacher for a reference, but it is another thing if that teacher only sees you as another student. Often teachers who really like you will offer to write a recommendation for you. As well, it is important to know which teachers are good writers. The teacher who really likes you but who struggles with writing may actually hurt your application rather than help it. Ask your guidance counselors for advice for references. You should also give writers plenty of time before the deadline (at least two weeks if not more). It is also important to follow up with thank you notes for recommenders. Sometimes it is nice to give small gift cards for teachers, depending on the amount of time required for the applications.

Tip #7

If an interview is part of the process, dress for success and be on time. Attitude is everything in an interview. If you know that several interviews are scheduled for one day, keeping the attention of the interviewers may actually decide who is selected for a scholarship and who is not. You don’t need to walk in juggling, but you should be relaxed and have a good sense of

humor. Make sure you know the names of the people who you need to thank. Sometimes you can ask for business cards or you may be able to find this information out on web sites.

Tip #8

Finding out information about available scholarships is half the battle. You should check frequently with the guidance department for new opportunities. Using scholarship web site is also good for finding opportunities as well. Sometimes schools may only nominate one or two students for some local scholarships, so you need to be proactive with your guidance counselor to make sure he or she knows that you are interested.

Tip #9

Attitude is everything. If you are not selected for a scholarship, you need to keep a positive attitude. Sometimes recipients are chosen because organizations want so many girls, so many boys or X number of students from the west side, X number of students from this geographic region . . . always remember that you can only control what you say and do on your applications.

Tip #10

No matter how small the award, every little bit helps and you may find surprises down the road. Some organizations will have other scholarships available later on for college students who were previous winners of scholarships in high school. Keep in mind that the \$1000 in high school could turn into an additional \$20,000 later on.

Tip #11

Keep track of your scholarship applications. Make a photocopy of the application that you submit if possible in case you need to review it prior to an interview. You may also be able to use information from one application on another.

Tip #12

If the application says to not submit supplemental material, don't. However, if it doesn't say anything about additional information, it is good practice to submit your "brag" sheet that provides a summary of your activities and awards. If you have art work, pictures on that brag sheet often make the application more interesting.

Tip #13

Go to the college financial aid web sites to look for what test scores, GPA etc. might be needed for different levels of merit aid. Almost all colleges have net price calculators on their web sites so that students know what they might actually pay, which is typically less than the sticker price.

Finally . . .

If you are a scholarship recipient, write thank you notes. People put a lot of time and effort into looking at applications and selecting recipients. Thank you notes are not only appropriate, but they are appreciated. Organizations like to know that they are appreciated and it helps keep scholarship programs for future students.

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