



Winning Your Dream Scholarship

An Ultimate Guide to Attain Scholarships

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CHAPTER

01

Introduction

It is often claimed that millions in scholarships go unclaimed every year because applicants are either unaware of it or do not apply because they think chances are low. However the reality is quite different, in actual fact there is every chance as long as a student takes action and tries for it.

So why don't more students get their scholarship? Here are some of the common reasons.



Looking for scholarships can be a tedious process, confusing and overwhelming. Going through countless lists online or offline, and each having a separate application form and process can make it an extremely daunting task.

Scholarship application processes are often cumbersome, some by snail mail, face-to-face interview processes and not utilizing technology to keep with the times.

Often you do not get feedback on your application status, how far off you are or when you might be informed. This can cause a lot of anxiety and waiting around indefinitely.

Sometimes, students themselves are to blame. Placing unnecessarily high expectations (expecting 100% fee waiver, even though they can afford to pay 50% of fees). It can

also be due to not completing their biodata properly, not submitting a well written testimony or not applying completely in the first place. Additionally, sometimes students are very specific on the institution that they want, thus overlooking opportunities for attaining scholarships in a similar or equally reputed institution.

Some education providers need more information on the students before they invest their time and personnel to look at an application. While school reports or transcripts may be one indicator but increasingly, institutions require independent tests to be conducted in order to gauge the students' competency and potential. The challenge is that these tests are sometimes too expensive to build and be maintained by a single institution for the sake of scholarship testing alone.



CHAPTER

02

Types of Financial Aid

In this guide, we will advise ways to enhance your chances for getting scholarships but first, let's make sure we're hunting for the same treasure. Let's look at the available sources for funding.

SOURCES FOR FUNDING

01 Grants

Grants are issued and given by the government as financial funds to pay for your tuition fees without the need of having to pay them back. Competition is extremely fierce and the selection process arduous. Even the best performing students are not guaranteed to win these funds due to its limited grant allocations.

02 Student Loans

With student loans, you are applying with some form of lender (a large company, foundation, governments, banks etc) who will loan you the money for a time, but eventually you will have to pay the full amount back, along with some added amount of interest.

03 Family Funds

Often call FAMA scholarships (Father and Mother). Sure parents love you and want the best for you, however not all parents can afford to send you to that ideal college or university that you want. Even if they could, wouldn't it be great if you could source for your own funding as well and lighten their burden? Maybe they could save that money for your future car or down payment for house - who knows 😊

04 Scholarships

The main focus we want to share in this guide. These are usually monetary contributions awarded to a student. Scholarships are similar to grants in that they are money that you don't have to pay back. Generally, the term "grants" are used to describe government funds and "scholarships" are used to describe non-government funds, such as those given by private companies, education providers and other organizations.

Scholarships however do not just come around as easy as they may sound. For you to get a scholarship, a lot of work has to be put in. Also, demands for the scholarship often increase with an increase in the amount and benefits to be offered by the sponsors. Thus it is advisable that students aim within the range of their capabilities to increase the chances of winning that scholarship.

Before highlighting on the best ways and tips on how to get a scholarship, it is important that we first understand the types of scholarships that are out there and how they work.

There is a bunch of scholarships out there and it is only wise if you are able to narrow down your interests and career choice in order to be in a position of getting the scholarship that best helps you achieve your dreams and ambitions. There are essentially two main categories of scholarships - Merit based and Needs based.

Needs Based

These are generally scholarships to help communities from various underprivileged backgrounds. These scholarships can range from minority groups, low income groups, handicap groups and many others who need help. Candidates must show documented proof of their income level or evidence that they need the help to qualify.



Merit Based

These are scholarships awarded to students who demonstrate outstanding performance. We will look at some of these scholarships next.



03 Merit Based Scholarships

01 Academic Scholarships

These scholarships are offered to students who have shown excellence in their academic performance and achievements. Discipline is also considered and factored in these scholarships. Thus maintaining a high level of discipline is an added advantage. These scholarships are very competitive but if you are lucky enough to win one, rest assured that the rest of your time in college will be one without financial constraints.

03 Maths Scholarships

These are scholarships offered to the best students in maths. There are many maths competitions around and winning some of these would be a great testimony for you to qualify for these scholarships. Demonstrated performance in test scores or competitions are needed for these scholarships.

05 Music Scholarships

These scholarships are especially for those who excel in various aspects in the musical arena. Aspiring performers, singers or orchestra members vie for these scholarships. It is common to submit musical works, or performances to qualify for these scholarships.

02 Athletic Scholarships

These scholarships are designed to support students who are gifted in the world of sports. The scholarships are usually used as a way for the college to have the best in the said sport playing for their teams and thus improving the sports ranking of the school. Due to this, one of the requirements for one to get an athletic scholarship is the willingness to play for the college team once the scholarship is offered. Demonstrated performance and achievements are usually needed for these scholarships.

04 Art Scholarships

These are scholarships offered to those that have an eye for art. They are offered to poets, musicians, photographers, painters, dancers and any other work of art that a student may be able to offer. The scholarships aims at encouraging students to pursue careers in areas where they are naturally gifted and also provide a platform for them in the respective colleges where they can get a chance to nurture their talents. At the same time, the colleges get the benefit of having the best in the specific fields of talent. If you have a thing for being able to convert ordinary things into outstanding and extra ordinary things through art, then this is your scholarship. A portfolio needs to be submitted for these scholarships.



CHAPTER

04

Tips to Win Scholarships

It is important to always ensure that you make the best presentation and minimize all the chances of missing out on the scholarship. You need to give your 100% and leave the panelists with nothing but an impression that will only lead to them picking you and not anyone else. Remember, you are not the only one who is applying for that scholarship and you are not the only one with all those good grades or with those skills when it comes to athletics. There are many people who are qualified and in such a competition, those who really stand out are the one that end up being picked.

01 Take Action

All too often the first step is the hardest one. You have to start the application process and then make a commitment to follow through. There are so many options available however if you just spend hours and hours looking for options but not making an application, then you are still basically at ZERO. Also too often student 'wait for the perfect scholarship' to come along ie Harvard + 100% scholarships etc, and it never comes along. It is better to be realistic, shortlist a few and then start making those applications. If all you do is wait, you have a 0% chance of getting scholarships.

02 Start Early

Applying for scholarships should start as early as when you are in your junior year. You do not have to wait until the last minute for you to make that application. Remember, some of the awards are offered on a first come first served basis and it means that if you choose to apply on your senior years, chances are someone who applied when they were still in their junior year has already been selected meaning that you came late even if you met the

deadline. Even if you do not get a scholarship by the time you are joining college, don't give up your dream. Keep on sending those applications until you finally get one that caters for your dreams and make the best out of it.

03 Answer All Questions

You need to show that you are willing to invest everything you have in order to get the scholarship. Do not skip any question even those that are labeled as optional. Taking time to answer all the questions shows that you really care about getting the scholarship and was willing to spend your time in answering the questions. Remember, the application is not aimed at measuring your academic prowess because that will be catered for by your transcripts and recommendations from the school, the application is there to look into what else you can offer besides what they already know from your attachments.

04 Apply As Many As Possible

There is always something with numbers in that the more you have, the better the chances of you being successful. The more applications

you make, the easier it is for you since you become familiar with the process and also improve your writing skills one application after the other. It is important to make sure that you apply for all the scholarships that you qualify for. This means that even if you miss on one, there is that possibility on scoring on the next one, and the other one after that. It leaves you with options and alternatives and this ensures that you don't end up in the cold at the end of it. After all, it wouldn't harm if you had one or more scholarships as it is just an addition to your bowl.

05 Pursue Less Competitive Scholarships

In some instances, you don't always have to go for those lucrative scholarships that everyone else is looking for. There is too much competition in those scholarships due to the high number of equally qualified candidates and this lowers your chances of getting the scholarship. With scholarships where not so many people have applied, the sponsors easily point out the applications that stand out and having followed all the directions, there are higher chances of being selected. The

scholarships that might be regarded as small will add up and eventually will be able to meet all the financial needs to take you through college.

06 Win The Sponsors' Heart

When doing the application, it is important that you do some research on what the sponsors do and why they actually offer the scholarships. Knowing something about the sponsors will guide you in answering the questions asked and also when writing your essay. Strictly follow all the instructions that are laid down by the sponsors and ensure that your responses are in line with what the sponsors are looking for. Remember, the sponsors do not just want to give money away, they want value in return and the value is relative to the sponsor.

07 Do Not Miss The Deadline

Even if you meet all the qualifications, missing a deadline is as good as missing the scholarship. Have a plan with laid back timelines that you adhere to in order to ensure you hit all your milestones on time so as not to be

late. You do not have to wait for the last minute in order to finish your application. Chances are, you will compile your application in a rush and thus might end up making mistakes that could be avoided if proper planning was done.

08 Perfect Your Essay

This is the only opportunity you have to express yourself before the panel even meets you. It's your chance to convince those going through the application that you have more to offer and rightfully deserves the scholarship. Write about something that you are passionate about, something that interests you. When you write something that comes from within you, it becomes easy to express and convince the sponsors that you are indeed the right person for the scholarship. Let the essay sell you as a brand that and not just as the ordinary student who just wants a scholarship to take them through college. Make your essay more about you and how you will add value to the college or the sponsors and at the same time ensure that you maintain the niche that the sponsors are looking for and this way you increase your chances of winning the scholarship.

09 Choose The Right Referees

When choosing your references, make sure they are people who would vouch for you no matter the time they receive that call or that time they are asked to write you a recommendation. Ensure that they are people who have a good reputation and they can actually add value to your application. The panel and the sponsors will more often than not judge your character based on the words from the referees and hence ensure that you are in good terms with the referees too so as not to jeopardize your chances of being awarded the scholarship.

10 Avoid Errors

Small mistakes in your application might lead to your disqualification. Ensure that your grammar is on point and that the tone in your application is formal and sincere. Follow all the instructions as laid down in the requirements to ensure that your application passes all the stages in the scrutiny process. Do not give the sponsors a reason to deny you the sponsorship. It's those mistakes that cost us big fortunes and thus make an effort of ensuring that

your application is perfectly neat and always use printed application unless in cases where the instructions specific ask you to do a hand written one.

11 Mention All Achievements

Sponsors want to be associated with the best of the best in the field that they are looking at. Do not forget to mention all the honors and achievements that you have had during your time in school and also that you did out of school. They show a level of commitment and also boost your academic achievements. As earlier stated, scholarships are mostly awarded on merit and hence, the more you have the better your chances of convincing the sponsors that you are the perfect person that they are looking for. Highlight more on those merits that are relevant to the scholarship and also where possible, attach any of the documents that may support and show that you were actually involved in the stated activities.

12 Ask For Help

During your application, do not feel like you have to do everything on your own. Always ask for assistance when need be so as to

make sure you do not make mistakes. Your teachers may come in handy since they may have had prior experience with the application process and will guide you accordingly. If need be, also contact the sponsors just to make sure that you meet all the requirements and that your application is on point. Remember, the goal of the application is to be among those that are chosen and in cases where they only need one person, the goal is to ensure that you are the one.

After following these tips, ensure that you proofread your application in case of any errors and spaces that you might have left blank. Also, ask a friend to go through your application. An extra eye will help in pointing out those errors that you might have missed even after going through the application.

13 Maintain Professionalism

In the current age, social media platforms are being used by everyone. Even those that are giving the scholarship are on the platforms and thus it is important that you ensure you do not have any compromising posts on those platforms. You might have a very

nice application letter but have a very contradicting story on your Facebook, twitter or Instagram platform. These sites might be used to determine your social character and thus affect the scholarship. Your email address should also be professional. Do not use funny and quite suggestive words for your username. Use your official names as your user names throughout all the platforms and this way you will be safe.

14 The Interview

You might have qualified for the scholarship but that does not mean you have the scholarship. The interview is usually the last step and probably the most important in the entire process. Once you have been shortlisted, don't get too excited and at the same time do not so nervous. It is a step that you must go through so it is important to ensure that you make the best out of it. Just like a job interview, dress up for the occasion. Get that official look on, do not over dress as this may create the wrong impression to the sponsors. Do not be late for the interview, if anything arrive earlier than the scheduled time. Do some research about the sponsors and have basic knowledge on what they do and if the

sponsorship has been there for a while, find out what inspired them and why they still do it. At the interview, maintain a polite tone and respond to all the questions to the best of your ability.

15 Common Mistakes

There are a few things that you should watch out when making the applications. They are the mistakes that most people make and they end up costing them the opportunity to get the scholarship. Most of these mistakes are actually the opposite of the tips that have been highlighted above. They include but not limited to, having a bad essay, not meeting the deadline, leaving blank spaces, having unprofessional names, applying for awards that one does not qualify and not applying for the awards at all. It is important to note that the sponsors intention is to help those who deserve the scholarship and thus always make sure that your application is as good as it can get.

16 Maintaining The Scholarship

Once you have successfully achieved your goal of getting that scholarship, it is important that

you maintain the same high standards that landed you the award in the same place. Live up to the terms and conditions that were stipulated in the scholarship. No one really wants to take away a scholarship from you and go through the stages of having to award the scholarship all over again. Always update your portfolio every time you achieve something new that might help in boosting the relationship between you and the sponsors. These are the same people that help you once you enter the job market and thus it is important to always have a good relationship with them.

If your scholarship is renewable for instance after every academic year, do not forget to renew the scholarship. This is but one of the many commitments that the sponsors look into, and in case you fail to apply for a renewal, then the scholarship gets terminated. For all the merit scholarships, maintain high performance even when you join college. Those grades, that artistic eye, the athletic personality and so on should be a priority as you venture into other activities since that was how you got there in the first place.





CHAPTER

05

Conclusion

We all agree that these are tough economic times and the only way out is through education. Being able to go all the way to college is quite an expensive task especially for parents who are struggling financially. This is the reason why the government, private organizations and even individuals set out to help those students that might be gifted in a certain way but cannot afford to cater for the fees. Once such an opportunity is accorded to you, always make the best out of it and maintain high standards in everything. Your success in school is a motivation to the children in your neighborhood, your parents and even the sponsors and hence plays a major role in shaping our community.



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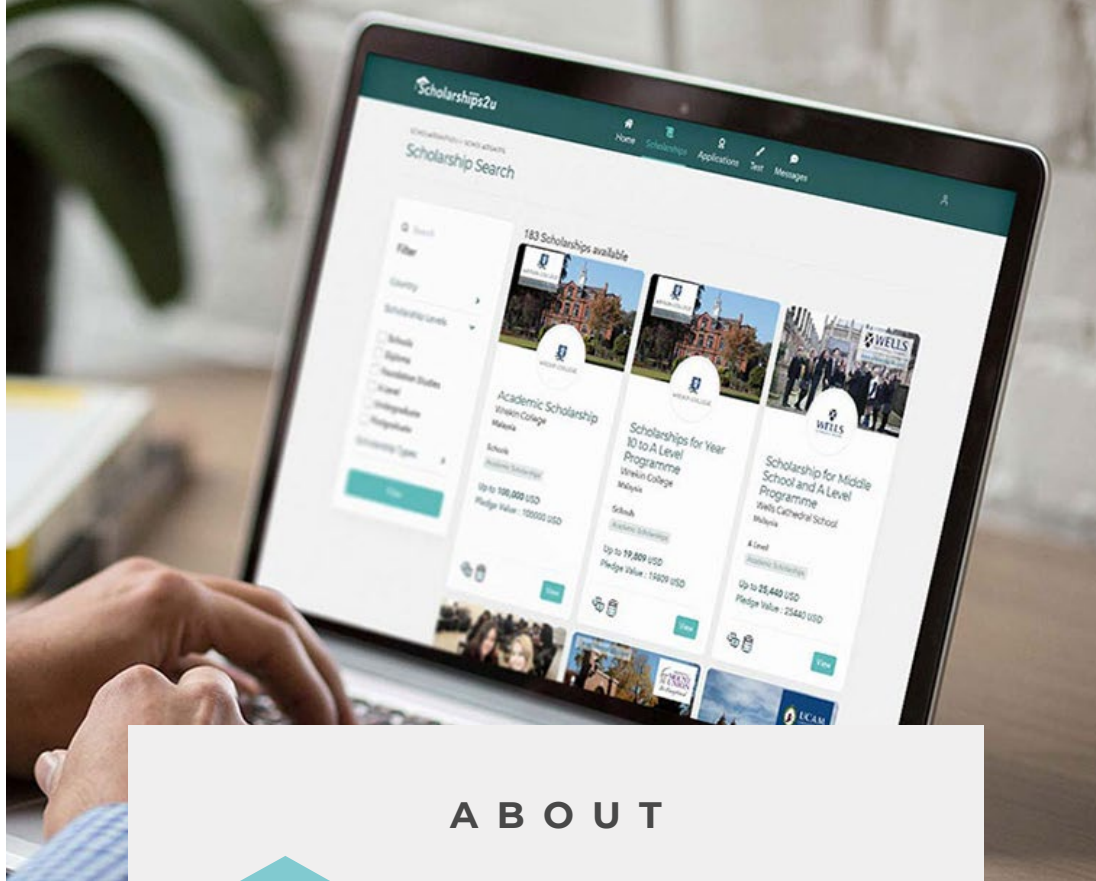
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