

# Where to Find Great Scholarships

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To help make your scholarship hunt more efficient, we present in this guide what we believe are the ten steps to finding the best scholarships.



## Buy a scholarship book and visit a website.

Invest in a good scholarship book and you'll have an invaluable resource that will lead you to some great scholarships. When selecting a book, choose one that offers detailed descriptions of the awards and an easy-to-use index. You don't have time to read through every scholarship, so an index will help narrow your choices quickly. For example, our scholarship directory *The Ultimate Scholarship Book* not only contains thousands of awards but also has a dozen different indexes based on criteria like field of study, career goals, hobbies and interests, talents and more. These will help you pick awards that are a match to you.

When it comes to the Internet, we recommend that you use as many online scholarship databases as possible as long as they are free. There are enough quality free databases that you should not have to pay for any online search. Of course, you can start with the search right here on SuperCollege!



## Don't reinvent the wheel: Speak to your counselor or financial aid officer.

If you are a high school student, start your scholarship search with your counselor. Ask if he or she has a list of scholarship opportunities. Most counselors keep a binder filled with local awards and scholarships, so make an appointment to discuss the ones for which you might qualify. Before your meeting, prepare information about your family's financial background as well as special interests or talents you have that would make you eligible for certain awards. Don't forget that your own high school will have a variety of scholarships from such places as the parent/teacher organization, alumni group and athletic booster clubs.

If you are a college student, make an appointment with your school's financial aid officer. Before the appointment, think about what interests and talents you have and what field you may want to enter after graduation. Take a copy of your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) if you have one. Mention any special circumstances about your family's financial situation and ask the financial aid officer for recommendations of scholarships offered by the college or by community organizations. Also, if you have already declared a major, check with the department's administrative assistant or chair for any awards that you might be eligible to win.



## Treat your activities and interests as scholarship leads.

Here's a reason to enjoy your extracurricular activities even more. One benefit of participation may be a scholarship sponsored by the organization. Inquire with the officers or advisors of the organization about scholarship funds. Bands, newspapers, academic clubs, athletic organizations and service organizations often have scholarships that are awarded to outstanding members. If the organization has a national parent organization (for example, National Honor Society), visit their website. Often you will discover awards that are given by the parent organization for members of the local chapters. If you're involved with a church or religious organization, be sure to inquire both locally at your house of worship and with the district, state, and/or national offices to see what scholarships may be available to members.



## Contact community organizations and civic groups.

If you've ever wondered why community organizations have so many pancake breakfast fundraisers, one reason is that some provide money for scholarships. Usually you don't have to be a member of these organizations to apply. In fact, many community groups sponsor scholarships that are open to all students who live in the area. If you are a college student, you may have two communities: your hometown and where you go to college. Don't neglect to check for scholarships and awards in both of these places.

How do you find these organizations? Many local government websites list them. Visit the websites for your town, city and state. Also visit or call your community association or center. You can also use the phone book to look up organizations. Some phone books even have a calendar of annual events that are sponsored by various civic groups. Finally, don't forget to visit the public library and ask the reference librarian for help.



## Keep an eye on local businesses.

Businesses like to return some of their profits to employees and students in the community. Many offer scholarships as a way to reward students who both study and work. Ask your manager if your employer has a scholarship fund and how you can apply. Some companies—particularly large companies that have offices, distributorships or factories in your community—offer scholarships that all students in the community are eligible to win. Check with the

Chamber of Commerce for a list of the largest employers in the area. You can call the public relations or community outreach department in these companies to inquire about any scholarship opportunities. Visit the large department and chain stores in the area and ask the store manager or customer service manager about college scholarships.



## **Find the professional association of your future career.**

There is an association for every profession you can imagine. Whether you want to be a doctor, teacher or helicopter pilot, there are professional organizations that exist not only to advance the profession, but also to encourage students to enter that field by awarding grants and scholarships. To find these associations, contact people who are already in the profession. If you think you want to become a computer programmer, ask computer programmers about the associations to which they belong. Also look at the trade magazines that exist for the profession since they have advertisements for various professional organizations. Finally, do a web search for professional associations at the local, state and national level.



## **Remember that big business can also mean big bucks.**

If you've never received a personal "thank you" from large companies like Coca-Cola, Calgon, Tylenol or Microsoft, here it is. A lot of these conglomerates have charitable foundations that award scholarships. Companies give these awards to give something back to the community (and the positive PR sure doesn't hurt either). When you visit business websites, look for links to their foundations, which often manage the scholarship programs. Many corporations offer similar types of scholarships. What if you're a student film maker? Think about all the companies that make money or sell products to you from cameras to editing software to tripods. Are you into industrial music? What special equipment or instruments do you use? Consider the companies that will benefit from more people using their products and services. Some corporations also offer awards to attract future employees. For example, Microsoft, the software company, sponsors a scholarship program for student programmers. Be sure to investigate companies that employ people in your field of study—especially if it is highly competitive—to see if they offer scholarships.



## **Ask the college for a list of scholarships.**

You may think that checks only travel from your pocket to your college to pay for tuition. But schools actually give a lot of money to students. Some of this money comes from the college itself while other money is from generous donations of alumni. Every college administers a number of scholarships, some based on financial need and some based on merit. What many students don't know is that often a student's application for admission is also used by the school to determine whether he or she may win a scholarship. This is one reason it is worthwhile to submit any optional essay suggested on a college application. Even if the essay does not impact your admission, it could be used to award you some scholarship dollars. To discover what awards may be available to you, send an email to the financial aid office of your college or of the colleges you are considering. In this email ask for a list of the college's scholarships. Pretty simple!



## **Hit up your employer or parent's union.**

Flipping burgers may have an up side. Even if you work only part-time, you may qualify for an educational scholarship given by your employer. For example, McDonald's offers the National Employee Scholarship to reward the accomplishments of its student-employees. There is even a McScholar of the Year prize that includes a \$5,000 scholarship. If you have a full- or part-time job, ask your employer about scholarships.

Companies often award scholarships to the children of their employees. Ask your parents to speak with their human resources department about scholarships and other educational programs offered to employees and their families. Like companies, many unions also sponsor scholarships for the children of their members.

Again, have your parents speak with the union officers about union-sponsored scholarships and other educational programs.



## **Search local newspapers as if they were treasure maps.**

Most community newspapers announce local students who win scholarships. Keep a record of the scholarship announcements or go to the library and look at back issues of the newspaper. Check last year's spring issues and you'll probably find tons of announcements of scholarship recipients. Then contact the sponsoring organizations to see if you're eligible to enter the next competition. A newspaper archive really is like a treasure map that can lead you to scholarships.



## **Final Thoughts ...**

As you look for scholarships, don't make the mistake we made when we started our scholarship search. That mistake was that we did it alone. Maybe we didn't want to share what we found with our friends or perhaps we just didn't see the benefit of working in groups. Whatever the reason, it probably cost us a ton of money. We've met thousands of students who have won scholarships from all across the country. Of these, the most successful are those who did not look for scholarships alone. In fact, they made it the biggest group project imaginable. Students who worked with others discovered that by sharing the awards they found and pooling their resources, they were able to find more scholarships in less time than they ever would have if they had worked alone. The end result was that these students had more scholarships to apply to and more time to focus on their applications. All of this meant that they won more money.

One additional benefit to combining your efforts with those of others is that you'll stay much more motivated throughout the process. And take it from us who have been there, it can be very discouraging to look for awards alone! So get together with your friends, classmates and even relatives and start looking for scholarships together. Who knows, you may even have some fun!