

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION TIPS

The following provide some tips to help you to be more successful in gaining scholarships!

1. Make a list of all available scholarships

After you have identified the universities you will be applying to, make a list of all the scholarships and awards that you appear to be qualified for. To compile this list, use scholarship websites (such as www.scholarshipscanada.com or www.studentawards.com) and university calendars and websites. It is also important to have your parents ask at their place of employment whether scholarships are available for children of employees and/or in the community. Note the deadlines for each award and the application process. Always verify deadlines for specific awards with university calendars or websites. Apply only to those scholarships for which you are qualified.

2. Identify “Guaranteed” scholarships

“Guaranteed” entrance scholarships are often the easiest way to achieve a scholarship. These scholarships are based solely on your high school average as calculated for admission to the program and university you are applying to. These scholarships are identified throughout this book for each university where they are available. Unless otherwise noted, you do not even have to complete a scholarship application to receive one of these awards. For example, if your high school average is 80-84.9%, you might receive an award of \$500 (sometimes renewable over 4 years). If your average is 85-89.9%, you might receive a \$1,000 award, and so on. At several Canadian universities, these scholarships are valued at \$12,000-\$16,000 (payable over 4 years) and in a few cases even higher. These are guaranteed scholarships. Achieve the marks and you automatically get the reward! Once you have determined whether the university you are applying to has guaranteed entrance scholarships, ask yourself this question, “What would you have to do to increase your average to get the highest guaranteed scholarship available to you?”

3. Meet the application deadlines

Once you have verified scholarship application deadlines with the universities you are applying to, ensure that your application and all supporting materials are at the universities before that stated deadline. Most universities will not accept a scholarship application after a deadline has been missed. Even guaranteed entrance scholarships are dependent on you having applied to the university by their stated deadline.

4. Neatness matters

Your completed scholarship application makes a statement about you. A carefully prepared application with no spelling or grammatical errors creates an impression that you are a quality

person. A disorganized, sloppy or error filled application gives a message to the scholarship committee that you may not be the kind of person they are looking for. Completing a scholarship application (especially where essays are a part of the application) can be a major undertaking. Schedule your time to complete the application as though you were working on a major assignment for one of your courses. Ask teachers and your parents to proof your application for spelling and grammar as well as content.

5. Avoid emailing or faxing your application

Unless the university (or organization) specifically states that you are required to email or fax your application then don't do it. People in official positions (such as the people on scholarship committees) are generally very busy. Their email security system might even block your attempts to email them an application unless they are expecting it by email. **The exception to this rule is when the application form is online, then you are expected to complete it online.** Applications sent by fax can end up being received in less than perfect condition. In addition, faxed applications do not always reach the right person on time. Where possible, send your application by mail. It would make sense to send it by Expedited or Express Post in order that you have proof that it was sent and also proof of the date that it was sent. In addition, sending it this way allows you to track on the internet when your application was actually received.

6. Focus on quality rather than quantity

In writing scholarship application essays, some students focus on listing every little thing they have ever accomplished or every activity they have ever been involved in. It is usually more important to identify a few activities and accomplishments and discuss specific ways you were involved and affected. In addition, discuss what you learned from your involvement and how this will make you a better student (and person) in the university program you are applying to. Providing specific examples to illustrate anything you are writing about makes your essay more believable (and shows you as a more genuine person). Be positive!

7. Help your references

The people (often principals, counselors, and teachers) who are writing reference letters on your behalf are generally very busy and appreciate your help. Sometimes, they might not even know you as well as you think they do. You can help them by giving them a one page outline of your major accomplishments in high school and in the community. At the top of this page, state the university and program you are applying to (and scholarship). It would also be useful to briefly state a few reasons why you think you are the best person for this award. Your one page summary should also clearly state the deadline date (and other relevant details) for submitting the reference letter. It is very important that you give a person who is acting as a reference for you as much time as possible to complete their letter on your behalf. A week before the letter should be sent, it is a good idea to remind the person (in writing) that the letter is required by the date you provided. It is always a good idea to send a thank you card to any people who were a reference for you.

8. Help yourself

Keep an ongoing file of activities, accomplishments, awards, etc., it will then be easier for you to complete scholarship applications once you are in your last year of high school. If there is something about an application that you don't understand, contact the appropriate person who is listed as a contact on the scholarship application form (by email or telephone).

9. Keep a hard copy

Applications can get lost. If you follow tip#5 you have a way of tracking the delivery of your application and also, if necessary, proving that it was received by the deadline date. By having a copy of your application, you are prepared for the worst case scenario of your application being misplaced or lost. In addition, as you are preparing your application, save your work often and be sure to have a back-up file. Stating that your hard drive crashed or you had computer problems will not excuse you from missing a scholarship application deadline.

10. Know what they are looking for

Read the criteria for the award carefully and ask yourself, "What are they looking for?" Always attempt to answer this question as you are completing your application. Some university websites provide details of former recipients of major scholarships. Read these descriptions and look for clues that can help you understand what should be highlighted in your application and essay. If possible, talk to former scholarship winners from your high school and ask them for tips. Whenever you have an opportunity to talk to anyone from the university (especially high school liaison representatives) ask them for tips. Don't hesitate to contact the university awards office and ask what they are looking for on any scholarships you are applying to. Knowing what they want can help you to be more successful. And follow the directions given!

SUMMARY OF TIPS

- 1. Make a list of all the available scholarships**
- 2. Identify "guaranteed" scholarships**
- 3. Meet the application deadlines**
- 4. Neatness matters**
- 5. Avoid emailing or faxing your application**
- 6. Focus on quality rather than quantity**
- 7. Help your references**
- 8. Help yourself**
- 9. Keep a hard copy**
- 10. Know what they are looking for!**