

TIPS

for SCHOLARSHIPS

Include an application letter. The cover letter conveys the package from you to the funding organization. It is one more opportunity to demonstrate professionalism and knowledge of appropriate business etiquette. If possible make a determination to whom the letter should be addressed. Be sure you have the individuals name and title spelled correctly. Avoid using either, “Dear Sir or Dear Madam.”

Follow the instructions. Provide everything that is required. However, do not supply things that are not requested--you could be disqualified.

Complete the application in full. If a question does not apply to you, note that on the application. Do not leave a question blank. Be sure to supply all additional supporting materials, including transcripts, letters of recommendation, and essays. Answer every question. If you don't believe that a question applies to you, don't leave it blank – it could be judged incomplete. Don't mark the question N/A, not applicable. The evaluators may have a different point of view on its applicability and can disqualify you for failing to complete the form. Instead, answer the question if you can. If the question is truly not applicable, write a sentence that describes your situation. For example, if the question is, “What is your military history?” it is preferable to write “I have never served in the military” rather than leave it blank or write N/A.

Neatness counts. Always type your application, or if you must print do so neatly and legibly. Make a couple of photocopies of all the forms before you fill them out. Use the copies as working drafts as you develop your application packet.

Assemble ALL requested information in the order in which it was requested, if one is specified. Submit as a single application package.

Write an essay that makes a strong impression. The key to writing a strong essay is to be personal and specific. Include concrete details to make your experience come alive: the who, what, where, and when of your topic. The simplest experience can be monumental if you honestly present how you were affected.

Watch all deadlines. To help keep yourself on track, impose your own deadline that is at least two weeks prior to the official deadline. Use the buffer time to make sure everything is ready on time. Do not rely on extensions--very few scholarship providers allow them at all.



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Make sure your application gets where it needs to go. Put your name (and Social Security number, if applicable) on all pages of the application. Pieces of your application may get lost unless they are clearly identified.

If requested, reference all community service work and community affiliations.

Keep a back-up file in case anything goes wrong. Before sending the application, make a copy of the entire packet. If your application goes astray, you will be able to reproduce it quickly.

Give it a final 'once-over.' Proofread the entire application carefully. Be on the lookout for misspelled words or grammatical errors. Ask a friend, teacher, or parent to proofread it as well.

Ask for help if you need it. If you have problems with the application, do not hesitate to call the funding organization.

It is also important to make sure your letters of recommendation are addressed to the organization whose scholarship you are applying for and that they are current.

When retrieving letters of recommendation obtain multiple copies and have each signed in ink. Letters of recommendation may not be considered valid if the signature is copied and not signed.

Do not add documents that have not been requested. There are many scholarship guides in the press that encourage you to add additional materials as a way for you to show your creativity and make your application unique. Judging by the available data, if you create an error-free, neat and timely application package, you will have already distinguished your application as unique.



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