



Scholarship Tips



**MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

What's a scholarship?

A scholarship is free money for college! You may qualify for a scholarship based on your grades, sports, activities, volunteer work, leadership, financial need, and more. A scholarship is a gift that you never have to pay back.

Academic and merit-based scholarships will ask for your grades, ACT/SAT scores, school activities, and other information. **Need-based scholarships** are designed to support students who show financial need.

How do I find a scholarship?

- 💰 Talk to an advisor in an MPS College & Career Center about ways to find scholarships.
- 💰 Talk to your school counselor about scholarships offered only in your school.
- 💰 Ask your boss, coaches, advisors of your clubs, or supervisor where you volunteer if they know of any scholarships you can apply for.
- 💰 Ask your parents if their workplaces offer scholarships.
- 💰 Check the website of the college you plan to attend.
- 💰 Search online! You can find hundreds of scholarships by searching on Google. Just type in an activity or interest along with the word *scholarship*, such as bowling, cooking, dance, foreign language, writing, and so on. You can search based on your sports, clubs, hobbies, religion, ethnic group, current job, or career interests. Try everything, even if a topic seems very specific. Scholarships exist for many groups and characteristics!

How do I apply?

- 💰 When you find a scholarship that interests you, read all the information carefully. Make sure you qualify—don't waste time if you don't meet all the criteria.
- 💰 Note the deadline and allow plenty of time to fill out the application.
- 💰 Check to see whether you can save your application and return, or if you must enter all information in one session.
- 💰 As soon as you can, request letters of recommendation. Allow your teachers, advisors, coaches, or boss at least one week to write a letter for you.
- 💰 If short answers or an essay are required, begin writing these in a Word document. You can save your work and may be able to use it for multiple scholarships. You'll also be able to use spell check or have someone review it for you. Don't try typing an essay into an application.
- 💰 Be sure to fill out the application completely and include all attachments such as letters or a transcript.

FAFSA

All financial aid (and some scholarships) depends upon the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Fill it out at www.studentaid.gov. Be sure to use this government website which does not charge a fee. The application for the fall semester of your freshman year in college opens on October 1 of your senior year in high school. Completing the FAFSA will tell you what aid you can expect from federal and state grants, work-study programs, and low-interest loans. Some colleges and universities offer scholarships based on your FAFSA application.

College Application Portals

Some college application portals offer information about scholarships and financial aid.

The Common Application, Inc.: www.commonapp.org

Common Black College Application: www.commonblackcollegeapp.com

Coalition for College: www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org

Universal College Application: www.universalcollegeapp.com

Writing Your Essay

Many scholarships include short answer questions or an essay. Scholarships can be extremely competitive—improve your chance of winning by following these tips.

- Check your spelling and grammar and clean up any mistakes.
- Ask a teacher, parent, or counselor to read your essay for you.
- Stick to the topic and answer the question they are asking.
- Tell your personal story in your essay. Write about why you are excited for college, interested in your major, or parts of your life that motivate you.

Timeline

Start hunting for scholarships as a freshman or sophomore. Keep a notebook of scholarships that interest you, including the name, purpose, web address, and deadline. You can refer to these notes as a junior or senior when you are eligible to apply.

Junior Year Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review your academic and career planning (ACP) tools in Xello.Meet with your school counselor to refine your ACP.Calculate your cost of attendance for your top five colleges.Take an in-person or virtual tour of your top college choices.Complete the FAFSA4caster to understand your estimated family contribution (EFC).Request letters of recommendation from your school counselor, teachers, mentors, coaches, or other adults who can write about your strengths.
Before Senior Year Summer	Research local and national scholarships, including faith-based organizations and your preferred schools. Use MPS scholarship lists from the previous year as a starting point. Write your personal statement and scholarship essay.
Senior Year Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meet with your school counselor to discuss your college plan.Apply for colleges and scholarships.Complete the FAFSA (after October 1).Set goals for applying for scholarships.Prepare for possible scholarship interviews.
Senior Year Winter	Continue to apply for scholarships.
Senior Year Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue to apply for scholarships.Review your award letters from all the colleges that have accepted you. Be sure to compare financial aid packages.Contact your recruiter or financial aid officer with questions or requests.
Throughout College	Continue to apply for scholarships. Apply for internships and work experiences that can help offset your college expenses. Consider careers that have special government loan repayment programs or service-related programs. If you have student loans, meet with your financial aid advisor to understand repayment options.

Understanding Your Scholarship

Congratulations—you've won a scholarship! Be sure you understand the terms of the gift. You may need to attend a banquet, maintain a certain GPA for a renewable scholarship, or provide additional information to the donor. Send a thank you letter to the donor and consider sending updates about your college journey. Find out how the funds will be delivered—as a check made out to the school, sent directly to your college, or another method.