

Free Money:

Ways to search for college scholarships

Many students have the misconception that only straight-A students or star athletes are awarded scholarships for college. That's simply isn't the case! Scholarships are available from many different sources, and students are awarded scholarships for all kinds of different reasons. Finding the right kind of scholarship for you – then applying for it, winning it, and keeping it – does require some hard work. However, the fact that you don't have to repay scholarship funds – meaning that a scholarship is FREE MONEY – makes that hard work well worth it. Commerce Bank offers you the following information to make your scholarship search as easy as possible.

Where do scholarships come from?

- ▶ Colleges and Universities
- ▶ State and Local Governments
- ▶ High Schools
- ▶ Businesses
- ▶ Clubs and Associations
- ▶ Civic and Religious Groups
- ▶ Private Foundations and Charities
- ▶ Labor Unions and Trade Associations
- ▶ Ethnic Organizations

Why are scholarships awarded?

Some of the most common reasons that student receive scholarships are:

- ▶ Academic Performance
- ▶ Athletic Performance
- ▶ Financial Need
- ▶ Religious Affiliation
- ▶ Minority Status
- ▶ National/Family Heritage
- ▶ Community Affiliations

Some trade organizations or labor unions may award scholarships to students planning a career in an area that is facing a worker shortage. Or, the company where one of your parents works may offer scholarships to children of its employees. Students with disabilities, or with parents who have disabilities, should also investigate those options. And finally, there are quirky scholarships with unique qualifications that you might

meet – you never know who might be looking to give money to someone just like you!

Where do I begin looking for scholarships?

First, you need to check out local resources – remember, the less people applying for a scholarship, the better your chances. Most importantly, be sure that you start early, preferably during your junior year.

- ▶ **High School Counselor or Financial Aid Office** — Make an appointment to sit down and discuss scholarships for which you might qualify. Ask that they nominate you for scholarships that are appropriate.
- ▶ **Clubs and Organizations** — Are you a member of a service organization through your school? Check with the club sponsors to see if there are any affiliated scholarships available.
- ▶ **Community Groups** — Groups like the Rotary and Lions Club award scholarships to students in the community. Check with local chapters for more information.
- ▶ **State Aid** — Check with your College's financial aid office about scholarships offered in your state.
- ▶ **Employers** — Ask your parents to check with their HR department to see if their company sponsors scholarships for employee's families.
- ▶ **Ethnicity based organizations** — Such as the United Negro College Fund website at uncf.org.
- ▶ **Churches or Religious Organizations** — These organizations may offer to help students of a variety of faiths.

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- ▶ **Groups to which your parents belong** — Do your parents belong to a labor union or community group? Have them check to see what scholarships are available to members' children.
- ▶ **Local Government, Businesses & Media** — Often there are various local resources that offer scholarship funds – you just need to ask!
- ▶ **Other organizations** — Including professional associations related to your field of interest. For instance, students who plan on majoring in engineering should visit the websites of major engineering firms.

Don't forget to surf the Internet! Register with the following free scholarship searches:

- ▶ fastweb.com
- ▶ studentaid.ed.gov
- ▶ collegeboard.com
- ▶ collegeview.com
- ▶ fastaid.com
- ▶ collegenet.com
- ▶ scholarships.com

Then visit the web sites of particular organizations, agencies, and companies that you think may want to award a scholarship to someone like you. Many federal agencies offer scholarships for post-secondary education. Some examples include:

- ▶ Harry S. Truman Scholarship: for college juniors who are committed to careers in public policy or politics
- ▶ Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship: for undergraduate students interested in the math and science realms.
- ▶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: for both undergraduate and graduate-level aid
- ▶ Military offers ROTC scholarships and other funding
- ▶ For links to a variety of federal scholarships visit www.students.gov

Should I pay a company to help me find scholarships?

No! Don't ever pay anyone to locate scholarships that you can easily find on your own. Companies that aren't legitimate may try to scare you into paying for their services by stating, "Millions of Dollars go unclaimed every year." This simply isn't true.

If you receive a phone call or letter stating that you've won a scholarship that you haven't applied for, be

wary! Don't give out personal information. Ask for any scholarship offers in writing. Check with the Better Business Bureau if you have doubts whether or not a company is legitimate, or visit www.ftc.gov/scholarshipcams.

What do I do after I've found scholarships to apply for?

Organization is the key! Make a calendar of deadlines. Keep a central file of scholarship information and copies of your applications.

Keep these helpful tips in mind:

- ▶ Fill out the application neatly and completely.
- ▶ Be sure to follow all instructions exactly as they are listed.
- ▶ Adhere to deadlines – if you can, apply early!
- ▶ Be creative – Try to find a way to make your application stand out.
- ▶ Be honest.
- ▶ Ask teachers, counselors and co-workers to write a letter of recommendation to send with your applications.
- ▶ Follow up with the organization by phone to make sure they have received your application. Find out what their timeframe is for finalizing their decision. Follow up with a phone call or letter if you don't hear an answer from them within the stated timeframe.

What happens if I am awarded a scholarship?

- ▶ Some scholarships are disbursed directly to the student to use as they wish. Many times, however, scholarships will specify how funds are to be used and will be paid directly to the school.
- ▶ Write a letter of thanks to the sponsoring source.
- ▶ Work hard to keep it! Most scholarships require you to maintain a certain grade point average.

Commerce Bank is always here to help!

Call 1-800-666-3910 to reach the experienced staff in our student services department. Commerce has more than 45 years experience in helping students with their financial needs. So, if you have questions regarding paying for college, or need help with student banking or loans we'll ask, listen and solve to find a solution that's right for your individual needs.

We ask, listen and solve.



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