

Scholarship Tool Kit



Tool Kit Outline*

- I. Scholarship information
 - a. Print off the scholarship for your future reference
 - b. Print off a list of sites or places you can find scholarships
 - i. Hint: Check them off the sites you've visited.
- II. Scholarship Tracker
 - a. A simple spreadsheet for tracking which scholarships you have applied to and every bit of information you might need to know about them
- III. Applications
 - a. Print off the actual applications. This can be helpful for future reference
- IV. Scholarship Resume
 - a. List of talents, skills, volunteer experience, leadership experience, sports, clubs, etc..
 - b. Makes lots of copies
- V. Recommendation Letters
 - a. Recommendation letter request form
 - b. Copies of your recommendation letters
- VI. Transcripts
 - a. Official Transcripts
 - b. Unofficial Transcripts
- VII. Financial Documents
 - a. Tax Transcripts
 - b. Tax Returns
 - c. Parent or Guardian Tax Transcripts
 - d. Parent or Guardian Tax Returns
- VIII. Student Aid Report
- IX. Essay Tips
 - a. Information and tips for writing the most successful essay
 - b. Copies of your essays
- X. Feedback
 - a. Ask for feedback and use it to improve your scholarship applications
 - b. Copies of feedback

When you are finished filling out the different forms, print everything off and start a scholarship binder and use this as an outline.

**Adapted from Carrol College's "Secrets to Winning Scholarships" binder.*



Searching for Scholarships

Step 1. Check locally

Local scholarships might offer smaller rewards, but the number of applicants will most likely be smaller than national scholarships.

- School counselor or high school career center
- Local business scholarships
- Civic groups
- Community organizations
- Your employer
- Your parent's employer
- Religious organizations
- Tribal Higher Education Packets

Step 2. Look into what your college/university has to offer

Many colleges and universities have scholarship funds specifically for students attending their school.

4-year MT colleges

- [Carroll College](#)
- [Montana State University](#)
- [Montana State University Billings](#)
- [Montana State University Northern](#)
- [Montana Tech](#)
- [Rocky Mountain College](#)
- [Salish Kootenai College](#)
- [University of Montana](#)
- [University of Montana Western](#)
- [University of Providence](#)

2-year MT colleges

- [Aaniih Nakoda College](#)
- [Bitterroot College](#)
- [Blackfeet Community College](#)
- [City College at MSU Billings](#)
- [Chief Dull Knife College](#)
- [Dawson Community College](#)
- [Flathead Valley Community College](#)
- [Fort peck Community College](#)
- [Gallatin College](#)
- [Great Falls College](#)
- [Helena College](#)
- [Little Big Horn College](#)
- [Miles Community College](#)
- [Missoula College](#)
- [Stone Child College](#)



Step 3. Go online and find the scholarships that are right for you.

- There are scholarships out there for everyone, just keep searching
- Create a separate "scholarship" email. An email only used for scholarship search engines
- Once a week check the scholarship search engines

Scholarship Search Engines

- [Reacher Higher Montana Scholarship Page](#)
- [MUS Search Engine](#)
- [MCIS Scholarships](#)
- [Fastweb.com](#)
- [CollegeBoard.org](#)
- [Scholarships.com](#)
- [Montana Community Foundation](#)
- [Mycollegeoptions.org](#)
- [Collegegreenlight.com](#)



Organize your scholarship application process:

see attached Scholarship Tracker Form

1. Write down each of the scholarships you are applying to.
2. Make note of when they are due and when you submit your application.
 - a. Check how they want you to submit the applications. Some require you to submit through an online application while others accept applications by mail only.
 - b. Hint: Once you submit your application, keep the mailing receipt or the confirmation page proving that you sent it in before the deadline.
3. Write down the number of awards offered and the amount of the scholarship.
4. Check to see what documentation is required.
 - a. On the Scholarship Tracker you can check the boxes coinciding with the required documents. This will be helpful as you put your application together and make sure you have everything.
5. Prioritize the scholarships.
 - a. With everything written down, you can make note of which scholarships you want to work on first. You might want to focus on the scholarships that have an earlier deadline, scholarships that have multiple winners compared to just one, or work on the smaller scholarships first to get comfortable with the application process.

Organize your scholarship awards:

see attached Scholarship Award Tracker

1. Keep track of the scholarships you are awarded as there might be requirements in order to receive the award.
2. Knowing the amount of each award you are receiving will help you as you calculate your financial need and as you look at possible loan acceptance.
3. Always keep track of the contact information provided for the scholarship in case you have to renew your scholarship, or just need to ask a question regarding the scholarship.
4. While some scholarships offer one-time awards, some scholarships have specific requirements in order to retain the award. Other scholarships you must renew annually. Make sure to write down any requirements in order to continue receiving that award.
5. Remember to send a thank you letter.



Tips for Letters of Recommendation

- 1. Choose people who know you well.** A more personal and detailed letter provides the scholarship judges with a stronger impression of who you are. Some scholarships will ask for an academic letter of recommendation and/or a community letter of recommendation. Look to high school teachers, coaches, work/volunteer supervisors, or pastors/ministers who you know and respect.
- 2. Ask early.** Leave plenty of time between asking for a letter of recommendation and the scholarship deadline. Provide whomever you ask at least three weeks to write the letter and ask for them to give you the letter at least a week before the scholarship deadline.
- 3. Involve them in the application process.** The people you ask might have some great feedback for you throughout the application process. With their knowledge of you, they should be able to help you apply for scholarships that are best for you and guide you through the application process. If you involve them in the process, they will also be able to make their recommendation letter more specific to your needs.
- 4. Provide copies of some of the application material.** Give them a clearer picture of the scholarship and how you are trying to obtain it. Send them copies of the scholarship, your essay, transcripts, resume and accomplishments. This will assist them with wording their letter. You might also ask them to provide feedback on your essay.
- 5. Show appreciation.** Once you send in the application, send a thank you card expressing appreciation for their support. Through this you are building a positive relationship that may help you in the future when you need another letter of recommendation.



Request for Letter of Recommendation

Name: _____ Date: _____ Current GPA: _____

Scholarship: _____

Academic area/s of interest: _____

Please complete letter by: _____

Personal characteristics and highlights based on scholarship criteria:

History of relationship:

Reasons for applying to this scholarship:

Scholarship application attached: Yes No

Scholarship Resume attached: Yes No



Writing a Successful Scholarship Essay

Start Early

In order to make sure your scholarship is successful, you need to have plenty of time before the submission deadline. Whether you are following the tips provided here or tips you find online, the process will take a while. There is not a definite time frame but don't wait until the week before the deadline to start your essay.

Understand the Essay Question

Read through the essay question and make sure you understand what is being asked. It is important to understand who is asking the question. Many scholarships are provided by organizations or foundations that want their recipients to reflect values similar to theirs and the purpose of the award. Get to know more about the scholarship and who is offering it. If you still don't understand the question, ask someone to help you.

Focus on the Introduction

When you consider how many essays the scholarship committee reads, it will be smart to focus on an introduction that grabs their attention. Start your essay off strong by being creative. Try to think outside the box and you will stand out amongst all the other essays. Entertain your readers with a short, personal story. Hook them with intriguing facts, but don't begin the essay by simply answering the question.

Be Personal

This is where you are different from everyone else who is applying for scholarship. You have your own stories and your own personality. Stand out by showing the judges or committee who you are, what you believe and what or who has made you the person you are today. For example, if the essay question is why you want to work in the health science field, tell the story of how you took care of your sister after she sprained her ankle, the multiple surgeries and countless hours in physical therapy or your love for going to the doctor as a child.

Get Feedback

Ask as many people as you can to proofread your essay in order to catch every grammar error or mistake. Judges are looking for essays that are worth their time. If they find a grammar error, it will be thrown out. Ask your proofreaders to: look for grammar errors, check that you are answering the question/staying on topic, and to help you get rid of extra sentences or unnecessary words

