

How to Conduct a Scholarship Hunt

Billions of scholarship dollars are available to people just like you! Get organized by following these steps. You'll soon discover that finding and applying for scholarships is easier than you think.

STEP 1

Complete the FAFSA

Many scholarships require a completed FAFSA as part of their application requirements. Visit fafsa.gov to get started.

STEP 2

Secure Letters of Recommendation

Ask teachers, coaches, employers, and advisors to put in a good word for you. Request the letter a month before it is necessary with clear instructions on what is required.

STEP 3

Write a Unique Essay

Take something interesting from your background and make it stand out. Have you overcome adversity? Been motivated by an awesome occurrence? Use your original, yet mature, voice stand out. Have a teacher, parent, and editor review all your drafts.

STEP 4

Have Documents Handy

Grab your high school transcript and combine then with the documents from steps 1-3. Make sure you have both PDF and hard copies at your fingertips.

STEP 5

Start Your Scholarship Search Locally

Ask your financial aid office or high school guidance counselor about scholarship opportunities. Then see what local civic, church, or philanthropic organizations offer.

STEP 6

Pick a Website That Works for You

There are several websites with extensive lists of scholarships. Explore these sites and find the features that interest you. Some will send you emails with new possibilities, search the database for you, and alert you of pending deadlines.

FastWeb: fastweb.com

Cappex: cappex.com

College Greenlight: collegegreenlight.com

The College Board: bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search

Scholarship America: scholarshipamerica.org

Red Kite: myredkite.com

Niche: colleges.niche.com

Scholarship Monkey: scholarshipmonkey.com

STEP 7

Apply to Many Scholarships. Focus on a Few.

You'll find dozens of "no essay" or sweepstake scholarships. Casting a wide net is good, but to increase your chances of success, narrow your focus when you find an opportunity perfect for you. Then be thorough. Answer optional questions and have others proofread.

Good luck with your scholarship hunt!