



The Early Bird Gets the Scholarship

How and why to start your scholarship search early
(Information gathered from financialaid.com and finaid.org)

For many high school seniors, by the time you are done with your college applications and turn your attention to scholarships, it's too late for some awards. The unfortunate fact is that there are a lot of scholarships with applications that are due in the fall. Whether you delay because of procrastination or because you are preoccupied with college applications, if you snooze, you lose. To make sure you don't miss out on scholarships with fall deadlines, we recommend the following:

- Begin your scholarship search during the summer of your junior year – or earlier
- Get organized
- Start preparing in advance
- Reuse your college application essays for scholarships
- Submit your application early
- Don't despair even if you do miss some application deadlines

Begin your scholarship search during the summer of your junior year - or earlier. The number one reason most high school seniors miss the fall scholarship deadlines is because they do not start their scholarship search until the spring. Even if you are not certain what college or university you plan to apply to, start identifying and applying for scholarships as soon as possible.

Get organized.

If you start off organized, you are less likely to miss an application deadline or forget to ask for a letter of recommendation. Create a handwritten or electronic master file of the awards you want to apply for, along with their deadlines. As you collect application materials, put each scholarship packet in a separate file folder. Attach a checklist to the front listing all the required materials and the date you requested and sent the materials. The checklist should also indicate the deadlines.

Start preparing in advance. For the scholarships that are due in the fall, make them a part of your normal homework routine. Work on them a little every day. This will prevent you from being overwhelmed and ensure that you don't turn in a hastily completed, last-minute application.

Reuse your college application essays for scholarships. You can save yourself some time by pulling out pieces from your college admission essays and reusing them in your scholarship essays.

Submit your application early. Try to submit your completed applications at least two weeks prior to the deadline date so that your application materials can be ready and checked for completion well in advance of the official deadline. Early applicants may impress the scholarship judges.

Don't despair even if you do miss some application deadlines. The secret to winning scholarships is that you must apply not only when you are in high school but throughout college as well. Apply for the awards that you haven't already missed the deadline dates for and get ready for next year when, as a college student, a whole new door of scholarship opportunities will open to you.

When it comes to winning scholarships, the early bird really does get the worm - so start early to win more money. While you have a busy life and a thousand things going on at once, if you carve out a little bit of time to work on scholarships now you will be happily rewarded with some money to pay for school when you graduate.