



## TOP 10 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DO'S AND DON'T'S

(Information gathered from various Internet and local resources)

Scholarship judges may spend just a few precious minutes or even seconds reviewing your scholarship application. With such a finite amount of time to make a lasting impression on these important decision makers, it's crucial that you make the most of this opportunity. If not, your application may be on the fast track to the circular file...the trash. To help, here are the Top 10 Scholarship Do's and Don't's that you must know to increase your chances of winning.

### Top 10 Scholarship Do's

1. **Throw your scholarship net far and wide.** To find the right scholarship, you need to have a lot to choose from. Search [bermudascholarships.com](http://bermudascholarships.com), read your local newspaper and let friends, family and other community members know that you are looking for scholarships. Ask your parents, guardians and school guidance counselors for help. They can help you find scholarships, keep track of deadlines and give you feedback on your applications and essays. Ask them to spread the word at their church, job and with their family and friends. If you know what school you would like to attend or have already been accepted into a school, check to see if the school offers scholarships. Many schools offer financial aid to attract students.
2. **Choose quality over quantity.** Your job is to find as many scholarships as possible, however, instead of randomly applying, try to apply to the scholarships that best fit your background, talents, strengths, interests and qualifications. After you have eliminated the obvious awards that don't match, the next step is to prioritize those that do, based on award criteria and deadline dates.
3. **Understand the purpose of the scholarship.** Get familiar with each scholarship and understand the goals behind the reason the donor is giving the award. Scholarships may be designed to encourage students to enter a specific career field, to reward students who contribute to their communities or to help under-served students enter higher education. Use this information to guide how you write your scholarship application.
4. **Follow the application directions.** Make sure you take the time to ensure every "i" is dotted and "t" is crossed. Include all the information and forms requested, and answer every question.
5. **Write an essay that demonstrates why you should win.** The scholarship application gives the scholarship judges a sense of who you are and what's important to you. Think about what skills and qualities the scholarship judges seek and then describe how you match them. You need to let your best self shine through in your scholarship applications - don't be bashful about discussing your accomplishments.
6. **Proofread and get feedback from editors.** You can't write a strong scholarship essay in a vacuum. No matter how strong of an applicant you are, it would be difficult for a scholarship judge to overlook spelling or grammatical errors. Proofread your application and essays carefully, and have your editors do the same. Friends, teachers and even parents can make great editors.
7. **Practice for interviews.** Ask a friend or parent to do a mock interview with you to prepare for the real thing.
8. **Keep your applications organized.** If an application consists of several loose pages, label each page with your name and page number. This will help prevent parts of your application from getting lost or out of order. Keep a master checklist of all the scholarships to which you are applying, so you can check off the completion of each application.

9. **Make copies before starting.** Make photocopies of your blank application form before starting to complete it. This will allow you to practice before completing the final application or will give you a blank backup copy if you make major mistakes while completing the application.
10. **Make copies when finished.** Make a photocopy of your entire application so you can resend it in case it is lost. You will also find it helpful to refer to old applications when applying to other scholarships.

### **Top 10 Scholarship Don'ts**

1. **Don't skip questions or turn in an incomplete application.** If a question does not apply to you, write 'not applicable'. Do not leave any questions blank. In some cases an incomplete application can be rejected. Scholarship organizations receive far more applicants than they can support. Don't give them a reason to take you out of the running for not having a complete application.
2. **Don't ignore small awards.** When there are scholarships worth tens of thousands of dollars, you might think you shouldn't bother with the "small potato" awards. The truth is that a \$1,000 scholarship is \$1,000 less that you will need to come up with for college. Every penny helps and winning an award adds a line to your resume that can help you win other awards. Several small awards can add up to a significant amount of money.
3. **Don't think that you have to be an academic or athletic superstar to win.** There are scholarships based on leadership, art, music, theatre, community service, financial need and more.
4. **Don't be a victim of a scholarship scam.** Never pay for a scholarship search tool, to apply for a scholarship or for a listing of awards. You can find scholarships on your own for free, and applying for a scholarship should always be free.
5. **Don't use the shotgun approach.** This is where you blast out an application to every scholarship that you find. Unfortunately, this approach will most likely result in a pile of rejections. Remember that all organizations that award scholarships have different selection criteria. This means that the same application won't work for all of them. To win a scholarship, you need to be selective in the application process.
6. **Don't forget to answer the question in your essay.** There's a reason why the scholarship organizations provide the essay questions. They want to know your answer. An essay can be very well written, but if it doesn't answer the question asked, then it's not going to win.
7. **Don't wait until the last minute.** You may think that you do your best work on the day before the deadline at 3 a.m., but if you review your work you'll probably see that you don't. Take the pressure off, and allow yourself more time to complete an application.
8. **Don't misinterpret the deadline.** Don't assume that the scholarship deadline refers to when the envelope is postmarked at the Post Office. Check the application details in advance and take note of whether it is a postmark or receipt deadline. If the deadline is based on the date your application is received by the donor, be sure to mail the application in enough time to reach them by the deadline.
9. **Don't lie.** Answer the questions on the application with integrity and honesty. Don't provide the answers that you think the scholarship judges want to hear if they are not true. In some cases, scholarship committees may verify the information in your application submission. They also tend to be able to decipher when an applicant is stretching the truth about their qualifications or accomplishments when they conduct the interview.
10. **Don't think that it's impossible for you to win.** Every student who has won a scholarship has thought this. And guess what? They won, and you can, too!