

Scholarship Guide

*How to craft a winning scholarship application
(Can also help with college applications)*

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

This guide is intended to help students from Western High School during the scholarship application process. It includes information on what to look for, how to write a good scholarship essay, what to include on a resume, and general tips and tricks.

FINDING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR YOU

With so many scholarships available, it can be overwhelming finding which ones you qualify for and which ones you will be a good fit for. The following steps can help narrow your search:

1. **Look Locally:** the school website, the guidance counselor, and simply searching “scholarships in Pike County Illinois” can all help you find good scholarships from a community that wants to support you
2. **Consider your Institution:** the institution of higher education (i.e. college, trade school, university) that you will be attending may affect which scholarships you qualify for
3. **Filter by Field:** some scholarships require or give special consideration to applicants in certain fields/career paths. Healthcare, welding, education, and engineering are all fields of study that often have scholarships specific to them
4. **GPA and Standardized Test Scores:** GPA and scores from the SAT or ACT are taken into consideration on quite a few scholarships. Some may even require these numbers to be above or below a certain range
5. **Your Background Matters:** your background, identity, circumstances, and interests affect your life. You may qualify or be taken into special consideration for various scholarships based on these factors

STARTING YOUR APPLICATION

The most important part of starting your scholarship application is figuring out what the requirements are for that scholarship. Below are some questions to ask yourself:

- What is the deadline for this scholarship?
- Who do I submit my application to?
- Is an essay required?
- Do I have to submit an academic transcript?
- Will I need any letters of recommendation or references filled out?
- What personal or financial information is needed, if any?
- Does this application require me to have a resume?
- Will I have to interview for this scholarship?

WRITING SCHOLARSHIP ESSAYS

Writing essays for scholarships can be one of the more daunting aspects of the process, especially when you're applying for multiple scholarships that require essays. Here are some tips to make it easier on yourself:

- **Write a generic scholarship essay** or an essay template that you can modify based on the prompts of different scholarships
- **Pay attention** to what the essay prompts ask and what the **word count** requirements are
- **Have someone proofread your essay**
- **Make sure all grammar and punctuation is correct**

Remember to take this process seriously. Do not use AI or plagiarize from others in any way. Scholarships are worth a lot, and it is not fair to scholarship committees and other applicants to use work that is not your own.

REQUESTING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION AND OTHER ITEMS

When requesting letters of recommendation from teachers, employers, and others, it is important to always be polite and kind in your approach. Make sure to include important information about the scholarship in your requests and follow ups.

A template you can use to request letters of recommendation is outlined below.

[Name of Person],

Good [time of day]! I am currently applying for [Name of Scholarship] and it requires that someone fill out a letter of recommendation for me. Due to [reason you choose this person], I was wondering if you would be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me. If so, it will be due by [date the scholarship requires that it is completed]. Let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Remember to thank those who agree to write you letters of recommendation and to provide them with all the information they will need to complete the references.

If you need to request other information from others, such as academic transcripts or school information, then you should talk with the guidance counselor.

OTHER TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

These tips can help you in the application process to ensure that you are putting your best foot forward when you apply.

- Ask questions if you have them and make use of the resources available to you
- Research the scholarship you're applying for and what the values of that specific scholarship program are
- If you are close to reaching the minimum ACT/SAT requirement for a specific scholarship, consider retaking the standardized test to get a qualifying score
- Check in with the guidance counselor frequently
- Keep track of the scholarships your applying for
- Remember that you are awesome and deserve to pursue higher education without financial pressure

Here's a chart outlining some things to include and some things to avoid on your application:

Include	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic accomplishments, community/school awards, and recognitions (i.e. Illinois State Scholar, PCC Volleyball Top-Scorer, National Honor Society President)• Reasons why the scholarship committee should choose you• All the information they request	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listing out every certificate or award you've ever received• Putting down potential other applicants or coming off as too egotistical in your application• Adding personal details or information that the scholarship did not request

THAT'S ALL

For more assistance, check out what resources are available online and at your school. Good luck!