

FAQs and Myths for Scholarships:

What are my chances of receiving a Scholarship?

- Most scholarships are awarded on the basis of merit; thus, students distinguished by academic excellence, participation in extracurricular activities and involvement in community service have the best chance at receiving one of these rewards.
- Lottery scholarships, on the other hand, are chosen at random, meaning every student who applies has an equal chance of winning.

How does community service increase my chances for receiving a scholarship?

- Not only is community service experience a common essay topic but your involvement in community service can distinguish you from other applicants.
- Scholarship providers often look for this quality because they are looking to assist in funding the education of someone who gives back to their community and values making contributions of time and service for its benefit.

Does the amount I receive in scholarships affect my eligibility for financial aid?

- Yes. Often the scholarship provider gives your award to the college you are attending as credit towards your tuition.
- If this happens, the school adjusts your unmet financial need accordingly. Unmet need is set from the FAFSA.

Who should I ask to write my letter of recommendation?

- Start by asking a teacher, employer or mentor. Do not ask a friend or family member. A letter of recommendation is similar to a professional reference; choose someone who can articulate your strengths and praise your accomplishments.

How quickly will I be notified of an award decision?

- You will typically be notified within a few weeks of the deadline, though this varies with each scholarship provider.

How does the scholarship provider choose a winner?

- Each scholarship provider is looking for different skills or interests.
- A winner must meet all of the standard criteria required for the scholarship but also distinguish himself from the rest of the applicants.
- Read about the scholarship and try to determine what exactly the scholarship provider is looking for so that you can emphasize your related qualities in you essay or cover letter.

If the Required G.P.A. is 3.8 and I have a 3.7, should I still apply?

- No. If you don't meet the criteria exactly you shouldn't apply.
- Scholarship offers typically receive thousands of applications. Anyone who doesn't meet the requirements is typically disqualified.

What is the difference between a lottery scholarship and a merit scholarship?

- Most scholarships are awarded on the basis of merit; thus, students distinguished by academic excellence, participation in extracurricular activities and involvement in community service have the best chance at receiving one of these rewards.
- Lottery scholarships, on the other hand, are chosen at random, meaning every student who applies has an equal chance of winning.

Do I have to be currently enrolled in a university before I begin applying for scholarships?

- No, you don't have to be officially enrolled in a university to begin your quest for scholarships.
- However, you should begin applying. If you do receive a scholarship, the sponsor is likely to ask for eligibility verification. This may include, among other things, proof of college enrollment.

MYTH: Scholarships are only for top scholars and athletes.

- This one is definitely false. There are so many scholarships that do not take grades or athletic ability/participation into consideration whatsoever and some, while they do consider your GPA, the minimum may be 2.5, rather than 4.0. A lot of high school students have, or can achieve, a 2.5 GPA. One of the biggest myths about college scholarships is that only Valedictorians and high academic achievers receive them.
- While GPA is one of the biggest factors in determining financial aid, it's not the only one. Universities and private organizations award scholarships based on athletic ability, ethnicity, religion, and community involvement, in addition to academics. There are even left handed scholarships for southpaws out there—you'd be amazed what traits you have that can help pay the bills.

MYTH: You should begin searching for scholarships during your senior year.

- You can wait until your senior year, but it is really not advisable. If you do begin during your senior year, you should start as early as possible.
- Many scholarships have deadlines in January, so the sooner you begin the more you will have a chance at winning. Ideally, students should begin searching for scholarships during their junior year, around mid-year.

MYTH: You have to be a straight A student to receive a college scholarship.

- Not so. Often, it is more about what you write than how well it is written. Whether you follow the instructions and address the essay question is often more crucial to your success than how eloquently you write.

MYTH: The scholarship application process is a one-time thing.

- Not so. Each year, you need to look for money for the next and, as stated earlier, there is money out there for all of you. High school seniors, college sophomores, graduate students. It's worth searching before the first of January each year to see what is out there.

MYTH: Scholarship competition is too intense. It's not worth bothering.

- Sure there is competition. But so many of those applying don't take the time to properly read or follow the rules and answer the questions thoughtfully, or even correctly. Do everything correctly and you could be one of a small percentage of applicants who even gets considered. Here's another way to look at it. What if you spent a total of 50 hours searching and applying for scholarships? And, after all that time and effort, you win two or three scholarships, totaling about \$2,000. That's \$40 per hour, which is at least 4 to 5 times more than you can expect to get paid for doing pretty much any other activity or "job". And that doesn't even include the interest you'd be paying on that money, had you been forced to borrow it from a lender.
- Apply for as many scholarships as you can and you are bound to win something, provided you make sure to do everything you are asked and follow all of each scholarship provider's instructions.

MYTH: Most scholarship awards are small and not worth the effort of applying.

- What is small? \$1,000? If you win 7 or 8 scholarships that range from \$1,000 to \$5,000, you could pay for a good deal of your first year in college. Every dollar you are awarded is a LOT more than a dollar you save when you graduate and that money must be repaid with interest if you have to take out loans for 100% of your educational expenses.
- Sure, you may not pay for ALL of your school with scholarships, but even \$3,000 or \$4,000 per year would be a big help. Just apply to two or three dozen of them to increase the odds you'll win at least one or two.

MYTH: You have to be a high school student to win a scholarship.

- Many scholarships are for undergraduate students and those no longer in high school at all. There are also scholarships for graduate students. You definitely don't need to be in high school to qualify.

MYTH: You have to be a great essay writer to get one.

- Not so. Often, it is more about what you write than how well it is written. Whether you follow the instructions and address the essay question is often more crucial to your success than how eloquently you write.

MYTH: Billions of dollars in Scholarship funds go un-awarded each year.

- This is a common one, maybe the most common. Sure, there may be a few scholarships that go unawarded each year, it's hard to know for sure since there are so many out there.

- We have heard this claim roundly rejected time and again, sometimes even countered with a claim that would be hard to back up. The claim that no scholarship money whatsoever goes unawarded might be a bit broad and absolute to actually be 100% accurate
- However, you can rest assured it is not some staggering figure, but probably just a few scholarships here and there that don't get marketed to the very specific audience for whom they were founded. This is just something a scholarship scammer might say to tempt you to use their paid service
- Never pay to find financial aid for college.

MYTH: Finding scholarships takes forever and you're ineligible for 90% of what you find.

- Not online. Set aside twenty minutes and complete a profile at a scholarship search site and they will show you which scholarships you are eligible for.
- Now it's just a matter of reading each description and contacting each award provider as instructed by that particular scholarship provider.
- This is key. As mentioned earlier, if you don't follow the rules, you are probably just going to waste your time applying. Do it right if you want to win.

MYTH: Scholarships are all heavily weighted towards minorities and those with documented financial need.

- There are scholarships for minorities and those with documented financial need, sure.
- But there are a lot of scholarships that don't take either of those into consideration.
- The best way to find out what scholarships you qualify for is to complete a profile on a scholarship search site and let them match the scholarships for you based on who you are and what your interests, talents and academic credentials are.

MYTH: Private universities have greater scholarship funds, making final tuition cheaper than at public universities.

- Although private universities tend to give out more scholarships than public universities, the cost of tuition is generally much higher.
- In some cases a scholarship may not offset the difference in tuition between a public and private college.
- Make sure you examine all expenses and not just tuition to get a more accurate idea of what you can and cannot afford.

MYTH: Are there scholarships available to undocumented students?

- Yes, some scholarships do exist for students who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents

MYTH: You have to qualify for federal loans to receive scholarships from your university or private sources.

- If you don't receive tuition assistance through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), don't think it will hinder your chances to receive other forms of financial aid.

- University grants and private scholarships operate independently of the Federal Government and have their own set of criteria.

MYTH: You cannot apply for financial aid until you've been accepted to a college.

- Federal loans are given out on a first-come/first-serve basis, the same with many private organizations. You want to begin your scholarship research in concurrence with your general college research.
- Some financial aid, and most scholarships, is not specific to certain schools.
- Set a goal to send out scholarship applications with your college applications

MYTH: A full scholarship means I won't have to pay for anything.

- A "full" scholarship typically covers tuition in its entirety.
- Tuition is not the only expense you'll have as a college student. Room and board, books, and other living expenses are typically lumped into what's known as "out-of-pocket expenses", which can be as low as \$200 a year as part of a "full ride"
- If you receive a full scholarship, be grateful, but assume you'll still have to contribute some of your own funds to live comfortably.