

HOW TO WIN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS: **A GUIDE FOR PARENTS IN 10 EASY STEPS**

By Monica L. Matthews



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IF *I* CAN DO THIS THEN *YOU* CAN DO THIS!

As you read this, you are probably in the same place that I was when my son was a senior in high school. You have a bright high school student, are in the middle-income bracket, and have no idea how you will be able to pay for your son or daughter's college education. I was there myself and wondered if I would have to go back to work full-time (I'm a teacher, who now stays home with my 3 boys) to pay for the staggering college tuition costs for my oldest son.

Well, the astonishing news is that my son now attends a top-notch, very expensive university and I do NOT have to go back to work. In fact, we are paying nothing, yes, NOTHING, for his tuition. I sat where you are and decided that I would do everything in my power to help my son win enough scholarships so that I did not have to go back to work.

Most scholarship books are aimed at the high school student. This guide is aimed at the parent who wants to help their student win scholarships by doing most of the groundwork for them. What I did was partner with my son to allow him to enjoy his senior year to the fullest, while at the same time making time to write essays and fill out scholarship applications. Senior year is a very busy and complicated one for students. There are senior pictures, college visits and applications, AP tests, graduation requirements, ACT and/or SAT tests or retests, and many deadlines for your student to meet. Winning scholarships for college is often the last thing on a high school seniors mind, and yet it might be in the forefront of their parents' minds. How any middle income parent comes up with the thousands of dollars a year it takes to send their student to college is still a mystery to me. I did not want my son to have to borrow a staggering amount of money through loans and at the same time did not want my husband and myself to borrow the money either. We still have two more kids that will go to college!

This scholarship guide is organized into 10 key steps, each with a "Bottom Line". The bottom line in each step is the heart of the section, summed up into one or two sentences. My goal is to help *you* help your student to win as many college scholarships as possible. It will not be easy, but I think the information that I've shared here will make it *easier* on both of you. Good luck!

Bottom Line: Partnering with your student to help him or her win scholarships will pay off greatly when they are in college and you are not bogged down with the high costs of tuition!

1. GETTING ORGANIZED

How did I do it? Well, let's talk first about getting organized. I kept it simple by using one spiral notebook and several folders. The notebook was just a regular spiral one where I kept all my notes together. When I found a scholarship that I thought my son qualified for, I would write down in my scholarship notebook: the date the scholarship application was due, the amount that could be won, and the date the scholarship would be awarded. I also made note of the website of the scholarship, if available. This scholarship notebook went with me whenever I took a scholarship book and searched in my spare time. In addition to listing the scholarships and information on each one I thought my son qualified for, I also listed:

1. Each scholarship website I signed up for, with usernames and passwords I used
2. Any scholarship winning tips I came across
3. Essay ideas that would randomly come to me
4. The address and phone number of my son's high school
5. Each scholarship he applied for
6. Websites and contact persons I emailed with questions about their scholarship requirements
7. What each scholarship required (transcripts, letters of recommendation, etc...)
8. Scholarships to apply for next year, when my son was already in college
9. My son's social security number and other personal information that was often required on scholarship applications

In addition to my notebook, I also labeled folders that I used for keeping track of the scholarships that we applied for. You may find a different system that works better for you, but this one worked great for me. I had folders labeled:

1. School information (which held transcripts, copies of test scores, letters of recommendation, report cards, etc...)
2. Scholarship applied for (I made a copy of each scholarship we sent out)
3. Scholarships due soon (for my son to use so he would not get overwhelmed with the amount of scholarships we actually applied for)
4. Misc. which contained: mailing labels, school photos, scholarship resume, newspaper clippings, awards, community service, and other items we might use for scholarship applications
5. Scholarship applications (ones that were not due for months)
6. Scholarships won (my very favorite folder!)

Bottom Line: Get organized first. It will save you a ton of time in the long run!

2. FINDING SCHOLARSHIPS

So, where do you start? Looking back, I actually wish I had started earlier, in his junior year, to research scholarship opportunities, but I am living proof that you CAN start in the senior year and still win a ton of scholarships. What I did took a lot of time, but the beauty of this guide is that I also took the time to write down exactly what I did and I am now sharing it with you, so you can do what I did, in much less time.

Taking that first step is easier than you might think. I spent a lot of time on the internet researching “how to win scholarships” and “scholarship tips”. I went to the library and checked out how-to books on winning scholarships. I found one book that I really liked and ordered it to have at home at all times. My next step was to check-out the big, thick, scholarship books at my local library. These books were my favorite resource for finding scholarships. They have thousands of scholarships listed and come out with new versions yearly. I highly recommend these books, simply because they are portable. When waiting for my kids to finish practice, I could spend time searching through them and making notes on the scholarships for which my son seemed to qualify. When my kids were on the internet, I could still be looking for scholarships. While I was eating lunch, I would be skimming through the books finding scholarships. I found scholarships by using these resources:

1. Scholarship books
2. Scholarship search sites on the internet
3. Local high school websites
4. The local newspaper’s “Names in the News” section

Let’s get back to the big scholarship books. Like I said, I checked these out of my local library and requested as many as I could through inter-library loans. I made sure that I had the most recent version of each book. I read each entry to see if my son qualified for the scholarship. If I thought he did, I would write down the application information into my scholarship notebook. Those scholarship books are very big, but I found many scholarships in them that I have yet to see listed on a scholarship website. I also went through them page by page, instead of just skipping to the section that concentrated on students going into a certain major. Yes, it took time, but like I said, being able to take the books with me while running kids around and using any down time that I had, made it easy. While you are going through each book, don’t limit yourself to scholarships your student can apply for as a high school senior. Jot down the names of scholarships you come across that are for college students only. These are the ones you can apply for next year and you will save yourself a lot of time by listing them as you are going through the books now. Don’t just read through one book, they may be big, but you will get quite good at skimming each scholarship offered and deciding if it is one that your student may qualify for. As soon as you finish going through one book, check out another. Get used to taking the books with you and finding scholarships in your spare time.

Now you know the importance of being organized in your scholarship search. You have an idea of the best way to search through scholarship books. Now you can start signing up for scholarship search websites. Here are some that I used, but you can very easily use a search engine by typing in “scholarships” to find a TON of websites:

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www.fastweb.com
www.careercruising.com
www.scholarship.com
www.scholarshipexperts.com
www.scholarshipcentral.com
www.meritaid.com
www.petersons.com

At each website, sign-up with the preferences of your student. Most sites will immediately start sending you emails with scholarships they think are a good match for your student. Get used to the delete button! Check each scholarship suggestion out, but don't waste time with the scholarships you know your student will not qualify for. If it looks like a good one, add it to your scholarship notebook, making sure to note the due date of the application. Many times while clicking on the links from the scholarship websites, you will find even more scholarships to apply for. Keep adding these to your notebook.

Another way to find scholarships, especially local ones, is high school websites. These will list the scholarships they encourage their students to apply for. Don't limit yourself to just your student's high school website. Go to each and every high school website in your area and you will find even more scholarships to apply for. In my case, we live in a different county in which my son's high school was located. He was not able to apply for some of the scholarships on his own high school website (the ones requiring him to live in the same county as his high school), but was able to apply for others in our own county that I found while searching other area high school websites. I also found some local scholarships that my son's school did not list on their own website.

Start to read the "Names in the News" section of your local papers each day. There I found a ton of scholarships by reading about the students who had already won them. These were the kids who had graduated the year ahead of my son. I added the names of these scholarships to my notebook, to be researched when I had time.

Don't reject any scholarships applications that are need-based just because you think you might make too much money to qualify for them. What you consider too much income might differ from the guidelines used by the scholarship judging committees. Also, don't skip over big name scholarships like Wal-Mart and/or Burger King. My son won both of these scholarships, even though I remember thinking there would be so many students applying that he'd never have a chance at winning them. We applied for scholarships in the general scholarships category (regardless of what major the student was planning on) and those that were for specific fields of study (in my son's case, engineering). Apply for every single scholarship that your student qualifies for. Do not let the amount of money offered make the decision for you. The smaller awards *do* add up!

Bottom Line: Don't just rely on the internet to find college scholarships! Apply for every scholarship your student qualifies for!

3. GETTING GREAT LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Once you have an extensive list of scholarships for your student to apply for, you need to begin to put together a list of people who would be willing to write letters of recommendation. Think hard about who knows your student the best, but don't limit yourself to teachers. How about your church pastor? Long-time family friend? Former elementary school principal or teachers? Yourself? (Yes, I did find one scholarship that asked for a parent to write a letter of recommendation, and my son won that one!)

Help your letter writers out by having your student write a "Scholarship Resume". This is almost like a resume for a job, but it has everything the student has been involved in for his or her high school years. Be sure to include any community service, jobs held, interests, high level classes taken (honors, AP, etc...), awards won, sports played, leadership positions held, ACT and/or SAT scores, etc... Don't let your student hold back! This is not the time to be shy. This is the time to shine! Also include the student's name, address, phone number, and email address in a prominent place at the top of the resume. You can easily google "scholarship resume" to get more ideas and see what one looks like. My son had done something similar in school that was required of all seniors and we just used that and tweaked it a bit.

Have your student give one of these resumes to *each* person he asks to write a letter of recommendation for him. A short note can be typed up requesting the letter. In the note, include the name of the scholarship that is being applied for, the due date of the scholarship application, and the focus of the scholarship. For one scholarship, we asked my son's letter writers to share their knowledge and opinions of his working at his dad's shop, as well as a local restaurant on weekends to save money for college. That scholarship was for students that worked part-time jobs while going to school. By letting your letter writers know what the scholarship judges might be looking for, it helps them write a better letter and increases your student's chance of winning the scholarship.

Your scholarship resume will really help your letter writer see all that your student has accomplished and make writing the letter much easier. Be sure to also ask your letter writers to save a copy of the letter on a disc or in a file on their computer, so that if another letter is needed for another scholarship, they can simply open up the file, change the name of the scholarship, print out the letter, and then sign it. Just in case, make a copy of all the letters written for your student. In one instance with my son, the letter writer did not keep a copy of the letter. When we asked for another letter and he told us he did not keep a copy of the original, we were able to produce our own letter (I simply typed out exactly what was said in the original letter and just changed the name of the scholarship) and gave it for the recommender to sign.

Be sure to give your letter writers at least two weeks in which to write the letter. Everyone is busy these days and asking someone to write a letter with only a few days notice will result in one that is hastily written and probably not their best work. Also, don't be afraid to ask for two or three letters of recommendation, one from each letter writer, even if the scholarship requires only one or two. This way, you can pick the letter that you feel will help your student the most to win the scholarship and your letter writer will never know if you chose not to use their letter.

When you have your letters, you can then decide which ones you will use for other scholarships and then simply ask your letter writers to change the name of the scholarship, print out a new copy, and then sign and date the letter for the next scholarship.

Bottom Line: Help your letter of recommendation writers help your student shine, but give them plenty of time to do it!

4. ACQUIRING HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS

In addition to letters of recommendation, most scholarship applications require official high school transcripts. My best tip on this is to establish a personal relationship with your student's guidance counselor. Call him, email her, go into school and introduce yourself as soon as possible! I found that since I had done all these things, the times when we found a scholarship at the last minute and needed transcripts or signatures right away, I was comfortable calling her and asking for some special treatment.

I also got used to asking for official transcripts in batches. For example, if the next 5 scholarship applications were due in the next month, I would email my son's guidance counselor and give her the names of the scholarships that we needed transcripts for. I always got these many weeks ahead of the scholarship due dates. This is very important because you are dealing with busy high school seniors who often forget that they are supposed to stop by the guidance office and pick up a folder of transcripts. I'll be the first to admit that my son often had way too much on his mind to remember these kinds of things.

Something else that I was able to do was declare my heritage on my son's high school transcripts. I am half Spanish, but had checked "Caucasian" when I first enrolled my son in school. Sure, that only made my son one-fourth Spanish, but many minority scholarships only require applicants to be of "Hispanic descent". When I realized he qualified for many minority scholarships, I called his guidance counselor and asked for my son's ethnicity to be officially changed to "Hispanic" on his transcripts. She had no problem doing this for us.

Another reason to befriend your student's guidance counselor is that when he or she finds out how hard you and your student are working to win scholarships, they may think of your student first when new scholarships cross their desk. Priceless!

Bottom Line: Get your transcripts in multiple copies, way ahead of due dates, and make your student's guidance counselor your friend!

5. WRITING A MEMORABLE ESSAY

This is one area that your student will have to do almost 100% on their own. Resist the urge to write the essay for them! Scholarship selection committees will be on to you and toss your student's application right into the trash as soon as they can see it was not student written. There are so many students applying for scholarships that the committee will not hesitate to reject an application if it looks like a parent wrote the essay. You can, however, guide your student and help them come up with ideas for the essays. You can proofread the essays and have your spouse or other family member proofread them also. Remember, spell check will not find grammar, punctuation, or other mistakes that are spelled correctly!

One tip to make your student's essay stand out is to engage the reader in the very first few sentences. Using a personal experience that the student is passionate about is a good way to draw in the reader and make your student's essay more memorable. I remember an essay that my son wrote that made me laugh out loud as I was reading it. His essay had an endearing quality to it and really came from his heart. I could actually feel his love for his choice of careers shine through in his essay. He was able to use that same essay in several scholarships that he applied for.

Be sure to pay careful attention to the word count required for each essay. You can use the same essay for multiple scholarship applications, but it might need to be shortened or lengthened to meet the requirements of each application. Like with a parent written essay, an essay that has too few or too many words will be an easy excuse for the scholarship committee to reject the whole application. Be sure to save copies of all essays that your student writes!

Bottom Line: Do not write the essay for your student, but guide them with ideas, proof-reading, and word-counts. Encourage them to write from their hearts!

6. COMMUNITY SERVICE

Winning scholarships is not just about filling out an application, writing an essay, and bragging about ACT and/or SAT scores. Scholarship committees choose students that are well-rounded. Getting good grades in high school is wonderful, but I found that most scholarship applications want to know what your student did for *others* during their high school career. I was actually shocked when I first started looking for scholarships for my son and I saw how at least 80% of them wanted to know what kind of community service organizations he was, or had been, involved in. They not only wanted to know what service was performed, but also how many hours (exactly) were spent each year in high school helping their community.

Don't panic if your student has not done a lot of community service. It's not too late to make a difference in someone's life, while at the same time racking up community service hours and experiences that create a well-rounded student. Think back to each year of your student's high school career. Were they involved in your church? National Honor Society? Helped coach little league or soccer? Almost anything your student did to help out others and did not get paid for is considered volunteering and community service. If you still don't feel that your student has enough community service hours to be considered for most scholarships, start *now* and come up with a project! I realize that the senior year of high school is a very busy one and most students are involved in many time-consuming activities, but you *can* still help your student carve out time for community service. Help them to realize that putting in the work now will allow him or her to win scholarships so they don't have to work as many hours while they are in college trying to pay for their tuition. Also, I believe that helping others is the right thing to do and your student just might discover a new career choice when he or she volunteers in their community.

For community service, my son had some hours helping out at our church and some National Honor Society volunteer hours, but he really needed something else to show that he took the time to help out his community in a memorable way. I wanted him to be the founder of a project (words like "founder" and "creator" are very impressive to scholarship judges!) that he could carryout, but at the same time I hoped to help him in any way that I could. I thought long and hard about what he loved to do and helped him come up with a project that combined his love of running cross-country with his desire to help kids in our local children's hospital, where his little brother had several surgeries years ago. This project took some time, but it was not enough time that it affected my son's grades, sports schedule, or part-time job in his senior year.

When I saw how well my son's project was progressing, I sent an email to our local newspaper sharing what he was doing. I was shocked, but delighted, when they called and asked if they could do a human interest story on my son's community service project. His story ran on the front page of the paper, and as a result, his project became better known and more and more people donated to his cause. A friend suggested that I buy multiple copies of the article and put one with each scholarship application that we filled out. I jumped on this idea and was proud to show the scholarship judges what a caring student my son truly was.

My point in telling you about my son's project is to share how important I believe community service is to winning scholarships. My son was smart and athletic, but was not class president, editor of the yearbook, or any other high ranking position at his high school. The project that he did showed that he cared about others and took the time (but not a ton of it) to show it. It also gave him more to write about for essays and in answering the popular scholarship application question of how he can truly make a difference in the lives of others.

Bottom Line: Community service just might be the key to winning scholarships!

7. AWARDS AND HONORS

If you haven't already, take the time now to round up any and all awards and honors your student has received in the last three or four years. I also recommend making copies of any newspaper articles that mention your student and that you are particularly proud of. You may be surprised at how many you've collected over the years. These can be listed on their "scholarship resume" and used if the scholarships applications requests "exhibits" of your students' achievements. You can really make your scholarship application look nice if you make copies of the awards and place them in plastic sleeves to be included with the application. Be careful though, many scholarships are very particular about what you are allowed to include with the application. If it says, "essay, application form, transcripts, and nothing more" do not be tempted to add extra pages. Save those for applications that allow you to create your own portfolio-type of showcase.

If you do not have a good copy machine at home, go to your local office supply store and have professional copies made of your student's awards and honor certificates and/or newspaper articles. The copies will be crisp, clear, and ready to be inserted in scholarship applications. I found this to be especially helpful when I made copies of newspaper articles with my son's pictures in them. The high quality of commercial copy machines made a huge difference in how the articles looked.

Bottom Line: Find all awards, honors, and newspaper articles your student has acquired and have quality copies made of each!

8. PRESENTING THE APPLICATION

Each scholarship application that my son and I put together was a masterpiece! I am serious about this! We didn't just staple a few pages together, fold it all up, and mail it off in a letter sized envelope. Winning scholarships is like acing a job interview: First impressions are everything! You need a way for your student's scholarship application to stand out from the rest and I'm convinced that this is the way to do it.

Here is what you do. First, invest in a nice laser printer for your computer, if you do not already have one. Buy high quality paper to print on. I used 24 lb. heavy white paper. Print everything that goes into the scholarship application on this paper. It just feels more professional and shows that you have gone the extra mile to win the scholarship. Go to your local office supply store and buy nice glossy folders to put each application in. You are not simply turning in an application; you are presenting it to the judges like you'd present a very important paper or project to your teacher or employer. You will also need large, oversized envelopes to mail your applications in. The applications should not be folded or stuffed into any old envelope. The scholarship judges should see the application as neatly as when you originally placed it into the folder and large envelope for mailing. You will be investing in these supplies, but when your student starts getting letters in the mail informing them of scholarship winnings; it will all be worth it!

I made up labels with my son's name, address, phone number, and the name of the scholarship to place on each page of his applications. Some application instructions ask that you do not staple the pages together and you do not want your student's application and materials to get separated and thrown out because the judges did not know who each page belonged to. Remember that there will be hundreds and quite possibly thousands of applications that are read by the judges. I also used a bigger version of these labels to put on the outside of each folder. Make your student's application impress the judges and stand out from the first moment they pull it out of that nice oversized envelope.

When you and your student are filling out the applications, be sure to never leave any part of the form blank. For example, if your student only has two community service experiences to share, but there are four blank lines, then use the extra lines to explain more about what they did. There were many applications that my son filled out in which he would miss a part of the form and leave it blank. I spent extra time carefully reading each application and making sure he did not leave blanks or forget to check boxes on the forms.

Never hand-write a scholarship application, unless your student has impeccable writing. Most scholarship applications can be found online, with the form right there for you or your student to type into. If you can see the form online, but there are no fields that you can easily type into, there are websites online that will allow you to convert the form into a word document. (I often used: <http://www.pdfonline.com/pdf2word/>) If you have a hard copy of the application and cannot find the same form online, your last resort is to find a typewriter and fill out the form the old-fashioned way. We actually had to do this for a few applications!

Most scholarship applications are very clear about what they would like included in the application packet. Make sure that you include all the required items and present them in the order in which they are listed in the instructions. Also, if the instructions give you options such as “Include one or two letters of recommendation” always go the extra mile and include the most information that they will allow. Like I mentioned before, unless the instructions specifically said “ONLY include what is required”, I added my son’s community service project newspaper article in a nice plastic sleeve, his scholarship resume, and anything else that we thought would make his application stand out from the rest in each application that we mailed. As a final touch, I also taped a small, wallet-sized, picture of my son (his junior yearbook photo) to the inside flap of each folder. Right next to the picture I stuck a label with his name and address printed on it. It put a face to his name and made the application that much more personal.

All of these extra details may seem daunting and time-consuming to you and your student, but this is where you as a parent can really help. Early on in my scholarship search, I started to realize that this process was more than just simply filling out a few forms and getting a few letters of recommendation. I made the decision to do whatever I possibly could to help my son win as many scholarships as possible. We formed a sort of working partnership, with each of us having certain jobs for each scholarship application. Here is a basic outline of what we did:

1. I found the scholarships, making sure they were ones that my son qualified for. This involved reading through scholarship books, websites, etc...and noting in my scholarship notebook what each application required.
2. I printed out each scholarship, even if they could be filled out online. That way, we could look through the hard copy and easily gather all the required documents. I also put a sticky note on each application listing: The due date, materials required, and the subject and length of the essay that my son needed to write. (Hint: Make the due date a week ahead of the *real* due date.)
3. I would email my son (yes, even though we were living in the same house) reminding him to ask his letter of recommendation writers for the letters that he needed, as well as how many copies of his transcripts he needed to request from his high school counselor. Sometimes this would mean sending a text to him right after school that said something like “Did you get the letters?” Remember how busy (yes, and in my case, forgetful) high school seniors are!
4. I filled out each scholarship application form for my son with the information that did not change, like name, address, high school attended, etc... If the form was not found online easily, I would be the one to convert it to a word document or pull out the typewriter and fill it out that way.
5. I bought the heavy paper, glossy folders, blank labels, plastic sleeves, large envelopes, and anything else we used to make the scholarship applications stand out and look wonderful.

6. After my son had written each essay, my husband and I would take the time to proofread them. I found that having two people proofread caught more mistakes and provided more gentle advice to my son about how he could improve his essays.
7. When the applications were filled out and all the required documents were gathered, I would be the one to put them all together in the order the scholarship instructions requested and into the glossy folders. I was the one to decide what extra documents would be added into each folder. I was also the one to check each form for any missing information and make sure that my son signed his name in the required places.
8. At this point, I always made a copy of the complete application, including whatever extra documents I included. I would staple the copies together and write on the first page the date that I mailed the forms.
9. Finally, I would put the folder into a large envelope, make up a label for the envelope, and take it to the post office. I didn't do anything special in regards to postage. I just had the postal worker weigh the envelope and make sure I paid the right amount of postage for each envelope. I read somewhere in my scholarship searching that companies do not appreciate scholarship applications that come certified and/or requiring a signature. This takes up their valuable time, especially when there could be thousands of applications that come to their offices each year.

Yes! The best feelings were the ones I had driving from the post office after mailing a completed scholarship application. Then I'd come home and see what scholarships were due next and keep up with the process. My son and I did this all through his senior year. It wasn't always easy and there were moments when we were both frustrated with the work involved, but when he started getting letters in the mail saying that he won, it all became worth it!

Bottom Line: You can be very proactive in the process of helping your student win scholarships!

9. OTHER WAYS TO GET MONEY FOR COLLEGE

You may be thinking, like I did, that you probably won't get much help from the government for your student to attend college. We did get some help though, and if we had not taken the time to apply for financial aid and fill out the government forms, we would not have gotten any help at all. I would encourage everyone, regardless of income level, to take the time to apply for financial aid. Not only should you apply, but you should apply *early*. Plan to have your taxes done as soon as possible after the first of the year and go ahead and apply for financial aid as soon as they are done.

Another way to get money for college is to encourage your student to decide what colleges he or she might want to attend and go ahead and apply for admission by the very first date the applications are accepted. Colleges only have so much money to give out and they start giving it to the students who apply and are accepted first. When the money is gone, it's gone! A student may get accepted into a school later in the year, but any money he might have received if he applied early would probably already have been given out. Your student may have narrowed his choice down to two or three colleges and I would encourage him to apply to each of the colleges by the earliest date possible for admission. You will probably have to pay more than one application fee, but each school will then be able to offer your student the most financial aid possible, since he applied early. It is much easier to get accepted at several colleges and be offered the maximum amount of financial aid than it is to apply late and only be offered admission with loans because the grant (free) money went to the students that applied early.

Bottom Line: Encourage your student to apply early to each college he or she might want to attend. Colleges give out money as soon as they start accepting students!

10. KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR WINNINGS

A few months after we started applying for scholarships, getting the mail at our house was very exciting! When the first letter came saying my son had won a scholarship, I was overjoyed. All the hard work was finally paying off! As the letters started coming in fairly regularly though, I realized that staying organized was still very important. Each scholarship that my son won had different requirements about what to do to accept the award. Some had paperwork to fill out and return right away, some had specific dates to mail the forms back, and some gave instructions on how to accept the award online.

As each award letter comes, be sure to put them in your “Scholarship Winnings” folder and note what is required of each to accept the scholarship money. If the money is sent directly to the college your student is planning to attend, call the school and make sure it arrives and is put into his or her tuition account. After all your time and effort, you do not want any scholarship money to be lost or misdirected. This is one more thing that I did for my son before he left for college.

The very last task that I helped my son with was to encourage him to write thank you notes to the people that wrote his letters of recommendation and also to each scholarship committee that chose him to win their scholarship. When I called the Wal-Mart Corporation to get the address to send the thank you card to, the person I spoke to told me that no scholarship recipient had done this before! I felt very strongly about taking the time to thank the people that made going to college without loans possible for my son. I hope you will encourage your student to do the same!

Bottom Line: Stay organized until the money your student has won is safely in his or her school tuition account! Properly thank everyone who was involved in the scholarship process!

TESTIMONIALS

How To Win College Scholarships was just what I was looking for! My son is going to be a senior this year. I had no idea where to start looking or how to correctly approach the scholarship process. This guide explains everything in super easy terms. The ideas are invaluable. I feel confident that I can do this too! Thanks for sharing your knowledge and experience.

S. K.
Palmer Lake, Colorado

As a school board member for 16 years and mother of 3 children - I wish I'd had this information long ago! Every school counselor should have this on hand to share with students and parents. Worth every penny!

C. B.
Euclid, Ohio

Organization made applying for scholarships a whole lot easier. Keeping track of the ones you've already applied for and the ones you plan on applying for, as well as when the due dates for those applications are, make it really simple to just go through when you have some spare time and fill out one or two applications. By breaking down each application into simple steps, preparing a good application that was likely to put me into consideration for the scholarship was neither difficult nor time consuming. By saving more time on each application, it made it possible to apply for more scholarships, increasing the chances of winning. To be honest, I got discouraged a lot when I was applying for scholarships, but the simplicity of filling out an already organized application made it easier to stay on task, and believe me, it's more than worth it in the end.

J. M.
University of Michigan Class of 2013

This guide is very helpful to anyone with high school students wishing to come out of college with little or no debt. Very well organized and all the steps are super easy to follow! A must read for parents and students alike. I used the steps in the guide to help my college aged son go to college for free and plan to use the same steps for my 3 daughters currently in high school. Well worth the money! Every high school should have this guide available for its college bound students.

A.K.
Croswell, MI

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