

FAFSA, Scholarships, and Financial Aid

Senior College Meeting #2



FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

THE NEW FAFSA USES INFO FROM YOUR 2016 TAX FORMS

THE NEW FAFSA: Free application for federal student aid (required by most schools)

1. Get an FSA ID number so you can complete the FAFSA. The student and parent must each have an ID number.
2. The new FAFSA application will open **October 1, 2017** Complete the FAFSA application as close to **October 1st** as possible
3. Use information from your 2016 tax return to complete the FAFSA

FAFSA HELP SHEET:

Apply for a student and parent ID# by going to FAFSA.ed.gov. An ID# is your electronic signature and required for admittance by more schools

- Don't miss important deadlines — some as early as mid February for certain state and school programs — by delaying your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application.
- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a requirement for federal financial aid including grants, loans, and work-study jobs.
- After you complete the FAFSA, you'll receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) that will list all of the answers you provided on your FAFSA. It is important to review these responses carefully to make appropriate corrections or modifications.
- Also important, don't overlook the PROFILE. Many private colleges and universities use the CSS/Financial Aid Profile to determine aid eligibility. Information is available on the College Board web site.

SCHOLARSHIPS

How do I find scholarships?

You can learn about scholarships in several ways, including contacting the financial aid office at the school you plan to attend and checking information in a public library or online. But be careful. Make sure scholarship information and offers you receive are legitimate; and remember that you don't have to pay to find scholarships or other financial aid.

SCHOLARSHIP WEBSITES:

1. **www.naviance.com** This web site hosts a scholarship data base of over 3 million scholarships. And is free to you. Answer few short questions about yourself and this web site will list all the scholarships in the database that you qualify for!
2. **www.fastweb.com** Fastweb, which has helped 50 million students find money since the site was founded 15 years ago, was the first online scholarship matching service and the first free national scholarship matching service. Fastweb's site indicates they currently have roughly 1.5 million scholarships worth \$3.4 billion in their database.
3. **CollegeBoard.com**: The College Board was founded in 1900 and currently helps 7 million students annually prepare for higher education. The College Board began publishing their book of scholarships in 1997 and since then has made the information available online. Their scholarship database contains more than 2,300 scholarship opportunities, totaling nearly \$3 billion
4. **CollegeNet.com**: CollegeNET is a technology company that builds web-based tools for event and academic scheduling, prospect and admissions management, tuition processing, and alumni development for colleges and universities. CollegeNET also operates a scholarship search engine and social network where students create topics, participate in discussions, and vote on scholarship winners.
5. **Scholarships.com**: Founded in 1999, Scholarships.com now claims to be the largest free and independent scholarship search and financial aid information resource on the Internet, with more than 2.7 million scholarships worth a total of \$19 billion in their database.
6. **Collegeincolorado.com**: Founded by the state of Colorado this is a comprehensive college information site. There is a wealth of information on how to apply to college and where to locate scholarships both in and out of state.
7. **Zinch.com** Zinch is a college students one-stop-shop for scholarships that are creative, easy and fun to apply for and win.
8. **RaiseMe**: Brand new scholarship site. Awards \$\$\$ based on high school performance-grades, activities, etc

Tips for Scholarship Application Success

Would you rather spend hours applying for scholarships or years paying off student loan debt? Us, too. Here are our best tips for finding scholarships and creating the most successful submissions.

1. Apply for local scholarships

Many communities offer local scholarships through clubs, organizations, small businesses, and benefactors. The odds of winning these scholarships are greater because they're open to a smaller group of students. Here's how to find local scholarships:

Check with your teachers and guidance counselor

Search local media websites, like television and radio stations

Check community portals

Use geographical Internet searches, like "scholarships in Texas"

Ask people who graduated

2. Apply for scholarships with smaller awards

Many students look for scholarships that offer the biggest bucks—but those are also the most competitive. Scholarships with smaller awards usually have fewer applicants, so your chances of winning may be higher. These scholarships can help with college costs like books, supplies, and living expenses. Paying off those smaller expenses can quickly add up to big savings.

3. More work = fewer applicants = better chances

Many students avoid scholarships that require a lot of work, such as essays, videos, and projects. As a result, the applicant pool is much smaller, which means greater chances for you. Scholarships with essays over 1,000 words often have fewer than 500 applicants, compared to the 5,000 students who enter easier scholarships.

4. Get personal

Instead of burning yourself out applying for every scholarship you qualify for, have some fun! Apply for scholarships that fit your interests and that you'll enjoy. There are scholarships for everyone under the sun: zombie lovers, vegetarians, Magic: The Gathering players ... the list goes on and on. The more personal the scholarship, the more likely your passion will show through, resulting in a better submission.

5. Don't introduce yourself in your essay

It's cliché and may even get you disqualified. Many scholarship committees conduct blind readings, and essays that include names or other identifiers are immediately discarded. Get to the point as quickly as possible.

6. Don't repeat the essay prompt

No one wants to reread the same sentence hundreds of times a day. Be original! Use the beginning of your essay to showcase your personality and set yourself apart from the crowd. Try starting your essay by setting the scene for a story or jumping directly into your answer.

7. Don't use quotes

Your essay should be about you. The best essays are unique and stand out from the competition, so be original and use your own words.

8. Satisfy all the requirements

You can write the best essay in the world, but if the prompt asks for a list of five things, and you only list four, you may be disqualified. Make sure you answer every question and accurately meet every requirement.

9. Stick to the word limit

Get as close to the word limit as you can, but don't go over. Exceeding the word limit may disqualify you.

10. Proofread

Spelling and grammar mistakes may get you disqualified. Make sure to proofread your essay at least twice and ask your parents and friends to look it over, too. The more eyes, the better.

11. Submit early

Don't wait until the due date, just in case there's a problem with the site, the Internet connection, or your computer.

12. Apply for as many scholarships as you can

The tip we hear the most from scholarship winners is to apply for as many scholarships as you can. Treat it like a part-time job and set aside several hours every month to look for and apply for scholarships. You should continue applying for scholarships for as long as you're in school.

13. Don't give up!

If you don't win, don't take it personally, and DON'T GIVE UP! Like most things in life, the most successful scholarship winners are the ones who keep trying. Find scholarships that you're passionate about and keep applying. Good luck!

Scholarship expert Unigo is a content partner of the MONEY College Planner.