

The Scholarship Search...Where to Start

Many students and parents hope they will find scholarships to reduce college costs and minimize the level of borrowing that might otherwise be necessary. However, many of these students and parents aren't sure how to go about the process of finding scholarships, and just as many don't realize how much time it can take to explore their opportunities.

So how **should** students start their scholarship search? First and foremost - **start early**. Pay close attention to application deadlines, which often come much earlier in the senior year (or even before) than most people think. The high school guidance office can often be the first step in the journey. Most scholarship providers have high school guidance addresses on their mailing lists, and counselors generally have an established way to advertise the available scholarships to students and parents. Another good idea is to take a look at a copy of the high school honors program at the end of the year. These programs will generally list the names of scholarships that students from that school have won. Ask the guidance counselor how to find out about a particular scholarship or contact the granting agency itself for additional information.

Some other sources of POSSIBLE SCHOLARSHIPS to investigate include:

- Community resources (community foundations, local trust funds, civic associations, social and professional clubs, fraternal organizations {e.g., Elks, Moose, Kiwanis, Sertoma}, patriotic and veteran's organizations)
- Faith-based organizations
- Extra-curricular organizations (4-H, Boy Scouts, music organizations, civic theaters, community service organizations, etc.)
- Hospitals or other health service providers
- Parent's and student's employers

Still not having any luck? Try any of the great websites listed on our "Websites of Interest" publication that features scholarship and financial aid information. Remember: There are **many** different types of scholarships available for **all** types of students meeting all sorts of criteria. Take the time to research scholarships that might be a good match. Also, **keep in mind that local scholarships generally will have smaller applicant pools, increasing your chances of receiving an award. Take the time to research local scholarships that might be a match first, then visit the larger national websites.**

Word of Caution: There are many companies who are willing to sell students their scholarship search services, sometimes for hundreds of dollars. Some of these companies are reputable, but many prey on willing students and parents. These companies can find scholarships for students, but enterprising students and parents can find the same scholarships on their own with a little initiative and dedicated time. Also, be careful of the "free offers" on some scholarship sites. Typically, these sites are set up to attract students as they navigate through the site. Oftentimes, these "free" offers redirect the user to potentially expensive offers for other products and services.