

Tips Towards Scholarship Success*

- ◆ Who gives out all this money?→ universities, colleges, banks, private foundations, unions, employers, companies, embassies, provincial and federal governments, etc..
- ◆ A scholarship is an award of money given on the basis of merit. Merit means that something is done well such as academics, sports, or community service.
- ◆ Bursaries are a sum of money given out on the basis of financial need.
- ◆ Virtually anyone who can meet the minimum requirements for university or college can be considered for a scholarship. **However, if you want to improve your chances, you should look at doing three things:**
 - extra-curricular activities**
 - community service**
 - keeping your grades as high as possible**
- ◆ Apply for as many scholarships / bursaries as you can.
- ◆ 10 qualities that most scholarship committees look for: **enthusiasm, team work, character, hard work, purpose, have had to overcome obstacles, initiative, community service, perseverance, and responsibility.**
- ◆ There are no guarantees in life. Have a look at the scholarship application form. If you can honestly fill in more than half of the entry space with good personal information, then you should consider sending off an application for this award.
- ◆ Being an “academic whiz” or “star athlete” is not necessary. Winning scholarships is about the quality of a student’s extracurricular involvement, not about the sheer quantity of activities.
- ◆ A person who flirts from one activity to another for short periods of time doesn’t carry as much weight as someone who makes a long-term commitment to a good cause.
- ◆ The greater the value of the scholarship, the more work that is involved in applying for it (and hopefully winning it).
- ◆ The high-value scholarships are looking for three things: **excellent marks, community services, and extra-curricular activities.** They may not use those terms exactly, but that is generally what is required to win.
- ◆ If you are serious about applying for scholarships, make sure that you leave yourself **lots of time** to fill out all the applications. They could take “hours” to fill out.

- ◆ Ask teachers, family friends, employers, etc. for letters of recommendation long before your scholarship application needs to be sent off. Also, it's sometimes helpful to include a resume (or brag sheet that is available in the Counselling Office) when asking for a reference letter.
 - ◆ Apply for a S.I.N. (Social Insurance Number). One may be required to accept certain scholarships.
 - ◆ Community service is work done for the community for no payment and extracurricular activities are done in and around the school for no academic credit. You should try not to put the same thing in both categories when filling out forms.
 - ◆ Choose activities that interest you. If at all possible, it would be very useful to do volunteer work in a field that you are considering for a career.
 - ◆ Parents can also help by compiling some background information for essays you will have to write. They can search the internet, local library, etc. for any information pertinent to your essay topic.
 - ◆ Also, parents can proofread your essays and offer some feedback that may help to improve the quality of your essay.
 - ◆ Parents can help search for scholarships you can apply for. Also, they can send away for applications for you and mark down deadlines for when they are due.
- * Tips have been compiled from a wide variety of sources: self-help books such as, "Coles Notes Guide to Scholarships and Bursaries"; Ben Kaplan's "How To Go To College Almost For Free"; Catherine and Ron Dugan's "College Smarts"; numerous scholarship websites in both Canada and the U.S.A.

Sample Questions from Scholarship Applications

(excerpts taken from Coles Notes: Your Guide to Scholarships and Bursaries)

Many scholarship applications call for a personal essay or essay-type answers to a set of questions. This is your opportunity to showcase the special skills and background you have that make you deserving of a scholarship. Your answers have to balance what you have done in high school and the community with the criteria of the scholarship. For instance, volunteering at a seniors' centre would be a good response for a scholarship requiring community service, but not as important if applying for an athletic scholarship. The better your answer fits, the more likely you are to win.

Remember the basics

- Fit your answer to the scholarship criteria.
- Use active verbs.
- Provide details of what you actually did.
- Always check your spelling and punctuation.
- Use black ink or type.
- Do not use liquid paper.

Here are a few questions often found on scholarship applications.

1. List six tasks you have performed that, taken together, describe your character.
2. Describe your volunteer community service.
3. Describe your volunteer activities at your high school, college and/or university.
4. Which of your volunteer activities have you found to be of most worth to you and others - and why?
5. What influence has your volunteer community service had over your choice of career?
6. A) List the major community activities in which you have taken part in the past three years and your role in these activities.

B) Select one of these and discuss why you became involved, how your community benefited and what you gained from the experience.

Sample questions from scholarship applications cont.

7. Describe your volunteer community activities. (*Notice that the material requested here is a reiteration of the material requested elsewhere, but asked in a slightly different format.*)
8. A) List the extracurricular activities you were involved in during the past three years.

B) Select one of these and discuss why you became involved and what experience you gained.
9. Describe your participation in student activities, highlighting the variety and type of activities, including offices held.
10. Describe any awards and recognition that you have received, mentioning both academic and other awards.
11. Athletic background: List your best personal accomplishments (maximum of five) within the last five years in team or individual sports, identifying the competition or event, your involvement and results. (Indicate date.)
12. What benefits do you consider that you have derived from your participation in organized amateur athletics or your personal fitness program?
13. What particular personal obstacles have you been required to overcome while in pursuit of your academic, extracurricular, amateur sport, fitness, health and voluntary community service endeavors?
14. Outline any special circumstances that may have affected your involvement in activities or that might have a bearing on your eligibility for this scholarship.

Remember:

- The first scholarship you apply for is the hardest - gathering all the information on your academic and extracurricular activities, finding references, etc. Each one you apply for after that will be easier because you have most of the information and strategies in place.
- Start early - that way you have plenty of time for essays, etc.
- Do not be intimidated if you do not have a 90+ average. Extracurricular activities, such as athletics, volunteer work and part-time jobs are as important as your academic achievements when applying for scholarships. There are also scholarships offered to students from specific geographical areas, students who are members of a specific organization (i.e., 4-H), agency (i.e., Credit Union), ethnic group (i.e., Aboriginal), or education-equity group (i.e., Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, visible minorities and women).