

Scholarship Training Guide



Washington Apple Education Foundation

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Washington Apple Education Foundation

The Washington Apple Education Foundation is the charity of Washington's tree fruit industry. With the support of growers, packers, shippers, and industry supporters, annually WAEF awards over \$1 million in scholarships to driven young people raised in Washington's tree fruit industry communities.

Since our inception:

- Over 3,000 students with WAEF scholarships have graduated from college
- Over \$16 million in scholarships have been awarded
- Thousands of students have benefitted from scholarship training provided by WAEF

How to Use this Guide

- We make note of those areas where students have struggled with the application in the past. Learn from mistakes others have made!
- The information we share comes from the perspective of volunteer community members. While we assume most community organizations share our thoughts, it's best to contact groups directly whenever you have a question about their specific application.
- This can also be used as a resource for you to share with those that are assisting you with your applications (letters of reference writers, proofreaders, etc.).



**Please contact us with questions at:
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Module One

What Is a Scholarship?

A **scholarship** is financial support awarded to help a student pursue education after high school. Scholarships are not loans and do not need to be repaid. They are funded by individuals, families, businesses, and organizations, each with their own values and purpose behind the award. For many students, scholarships make the difference so that college is affordable and achievable.

Each year, thousands of dollars in scholarship funds are left unused—not because students are unqualified, but because they never applied. **Making the effort to submit a complete, on-time application is the single trait shared by every scholarship recipient.**

Scholarships can be based on many types of criteria. Some awards are tied to a student's background, school, or region. Others may reflect specific career interests, academic achievements, leadership, community service, athletic participation, or personal goals. Every scholarship has its own eligibility requirements, and the applicant pool may range from many students to only a few.

Ultimately, scholarships exist to open doors. The more applications a student submits, the greater the chance of finding the opportunities created just for them.

Scholarship Myths – Busted

Myth: Scholarships are only for students with perfect grades.

Reality: Many awards consider leadership, community involvement, career goals, or personal background—grades are just one piece of the puzzle.

Myth: Only high school seniors can apply.

Reality: Scholarships exist for students at every stage—from high school through graduate school, and even for adults returning to college.

Myth: There's too much competition, so it's not worth applying.

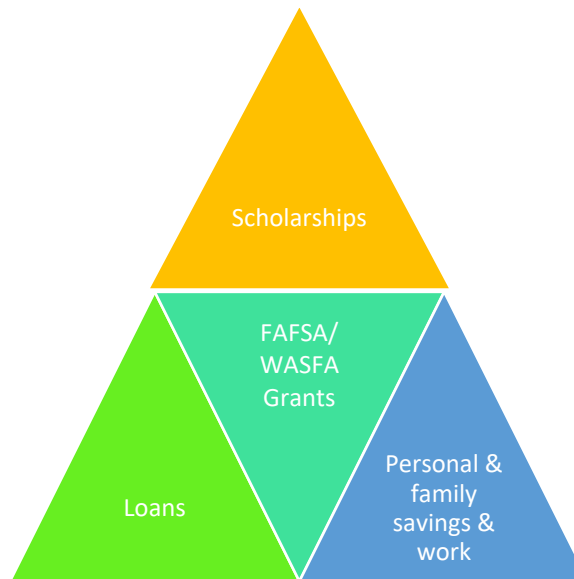
Reality: Some scholarships receive very few applications, and each year money goes unawarded simply because no one applied.

Myth: Small scholarships aren't worth the effort.

Reality: Smaller awards add up. A few \$500–\$1,000 scholarships can cover textbooks, housing, or tuition gaps.



Paying for College



Everyone's map for paying for college will be unique but everyone has the ability to pay for college. Focus on scholarships, grants and your own efforts first. As a last resort, smartly utilize loans to pay for necessary expenses.

FAFSA/WASFA

- The **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the federal form students complete each year to determine eligibility for financial aid such as grants, federal work-study, and student loans. (studentaid.gov)
- The **WASFA** (Washington Application for State Financial Aid) is Washington's alternative form for students who cannot file the FAFSA, often because of immigration status. It opens the door to Washington State financial aid for students who meet state eligibility requirements. (wsac.wa.gov/wasfa)
- The colleges you list on your FAFSA or WASFA use the information you provide—together with their own cost of attendance and policies—to build your financial aid package.
- Your **award offer** (the combination of grants, loans, scholarships, and work-study you're offered) depends on:
 - Your **Student Aid Index (SAI)** (the number calculated by FAFSA)
 - Your **enrollment status** (full-time, part-time, etc.)
 - The **cost of attendance** at your school
 - In some cases, your **year in school** (for example, federal loan limits increase after the first year, and some institutional scholarships may be tied to class standing).
- To get a quick estimate of potential aid, try the **FAFSA Estimator** tool on the Federal Student Aid website (studentaid.gov/aid-estimator).

- The FAFSA and WASFA generally open each year on **October 1**. It's best to begin the application early with whatever data you have. You can always return to update missing information.

Forms of Outside Funding Aid

- **Pell Grant** – A federal grant that does not need to be repaid. Eligibility and award size are determined primarily by financial need, as calculated through the FAFSA.
- **Washington College Grant (formerly State Need Grant)** – A state grant for Washington residents with financial need. Award amounts vary by institution and family circumstances. Students apply through the FAFSA or WASFA.
- **Student Loans** – Federal Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans may be available to cover remaining costs. Subsidized loans do not accrue interest while you are in school. Completing the FAFSA is required.
- **Work-Study** – A program where funding is provided to colleges and universities to employ students in part-time jobs, often on campus or with approved community partners.
- **Institutional Merit Awards** – Scholarships awarded by a college or university based on academic achievement, leadership, talent, or other criteria in a student's admission application. These awards are not based on financial need and are used to attract and retain students.
- **Private Scholarships** – Scholarships funded by businesses, organizations, or individuals. Each has unique eligibility criteria, which may be connected to a student's background, career goals, field of study, or community ties. Local scholarships often have smaller applicant pools, while national awards may offer larger amounts but be more competitive.

Which Types of Aid Do I Repay?

| Type of Aid | Do I Repay It? | Notes |
|----------------------------|----------------|--|
| Pell Grant | ✗ No | Based on financial need; awarded through FAFSA. |
| Washington College Grant | ✗ No | State aid for Washington residents; apply with FAFSA or WASFA. |
| Institutional Merit Awards | ✗ No | Awarded by the college/university for academic or talent achievements. |
| Private Scholarships | ✗ No | Each scholarship has unique criteria; some are renewable each year. |
| Work-Study | ⚡ You Earn It | You are paid for the hours you work (usually part-time). |
| Student Loans | ✓ Yes | Repaid after leaving school; subsidized loans don't accrue interest while in school. |

Additional Ways to Pay for College or Reduce Expenses

- Get credits while in high school through Running Start or AP classes.
- Take an extra job over the summer months to get a head start on college needs.
- Register for classes early and make sure you only get the classes you need.
- Increase your odds of scholarship and merit funding through grades and leadership.
- If right for you, attend a community college while living at home. Make sure this route will allow you to complete your degree in four years.

Determine your scholarship eligibility

Where do you reside (city/county)? _____

Which high school are you graduating from? _____

Which college, university or technical school are you attending? _____

Where do your parents work? _____

What industry are your parents employed in? _____

Where do you work? _____

Which associations or clubs are you or your parent(s) members of? _____

Each one of the areas above are likely qualifiers for one or more scholarships.

Are you Eligible for a Scholarship?

HUNDREDS of scholarships are available to students in your school. Below is a small sampling of awards offered in central Washington. Notice how some have very narrow qualifications and others are quite broad. Which align with your circumstances?

- James E. Jim Loudon Scholarship - Graduating seniors from Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan counties and students and graduates from Wenatchee Valley College are eligible to apply. Students must be pursuing a degree in agriculture business (or related field) or horticulture at Washington State University. <https://waef.org/scholarships/>
- Mollie Davis Scholarship/Yakima Rotary Trust – Open to residents of Yakima County pursuing an education at a two- or four-year college or university. Applicants being considered for this scholarship must be both a U.S. citizen **and** resident of Yakima County, Washington. <http://yakimarotarytrust.org/new-mary-monroe-davis-scholarship/>
- Jeff and Jolene Hattori - Scholarship is open to high school seniors and undergraduate students located in the Tri-Cities area preparing for a career in agriculture. The award may be used at an accredited technical school, two- or four-year college / university. <https://waef.org/scholarships/>



- Ferguson Family Scholarship - The Ferguson Family Scholarship was established to provide educational scholarships to graduating seniors from Chelan and Douglas county high schools seeking further education in physics or mechanical, electrical, or software engineering at Wenatchee Valley College who possess financial need and a commitment to engineering. [/www.cfncw.org/scholarships/](http://www.cfncw.org/scholarships/)
- Paul Lauzier Foundation – Scholarship is open to high school and college students from Grant County who will attend a college, university or technical college full-time within the state of Washington. <https://lauzier.org/index.php/high-school/>
- Clarence and Della Murray Scholarship - The Murray family legacy has been to provide a competitive scholarship that supports students from Chelan, Douglas, or Okanogan counties who demonstrate need, ability, and moral character. www.cfncw.org/scholarships/
- Dick Clements Memorial - This scholarship is made in memory of Richard Dick Clements, a man known for his purpose, conviction and character and his devoted service to family, community, and the tree fruit industry. The scholarship is open to graduating seniors from central Washington who will attend WSU. Preference to Yakima County students. <https://waef.org/scholarships/>
- Douglas Fruit – Scholarship is open to seniors from Pasco, Chiawana, Connell, Othello, Kiona Benton, Richland, Kennewick, Kamiakin, Southridge, Hanford, Burbank, and Tri City Prep high schools whose parents are involved in the tree fruit industry. <https://waef.org/scholarships/>

Scholarship Assistance

Scholarship opportunities are plentiful! **Identifying the awards you qualify for is your first step.**

Check back with scholarship resources time and time again; new awards surface throughout the year. Don't waste your time applying for an award you don't qualify for!

High School Counseling Office

*This is your **BEST** source for local scholarships and awards available to students from your school!*

Online Sources

Be aware! Do not pay for access to scholarship assistance and be careful with the information you provide to unsecured sources.

<https://washboard.org>

<https://www.fastweb.com/>

<https://www.unigo.com/>

<https://finaid.org/scholarships/>

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

Your College or University

Check online with the financial aid office, complete the universal scholarship application, ask your college recruiter, attend college fair or senior night, connect online or in person with the office of scholarship services.

Specific Degree or Career Path

Check with college professors, connected affinity or alumni groups, employers in degree field.

Activity Awards

Check with program/activity advisor, view the national website, ask your high school counselor.

Employer/Parent's Employer

Ask your parent/guardian to talk with their employer and/or human resources department.

Community/ National Groups

Check with local civic groups such as Rotary & Kiwanis and visit your area community Foundation website.



Module Two

What is the most important step to getting a scholarship? *Complete the application.*

What is the next major factor in receiving a scholarship? *Getting your application reviewed. This means you must follow instructions and meet deadlines.*

Sounds simple? Check out this questionnaire to test your knowledge.

Avoid Disqualification – Yes or No

Would you get disqualified if you submitted your application early?

No. Submitting early is fine—as long as your application is complete and follows the instructions.

Would you get disqualified if you submitted your transcript after the deadline?

Yes. Deadlines matter. If your transcript is late, your application will likely be disqualified.

Would you get disqualified if you submitted a résumé instead of completing the required form?

Yes. Scholarship providers require specific forms to compare applicants fairly. Skipping them disqualifies your application.

Would you get disqualified if you submitted your transcript without your fall term grades?

Yes, if the instructions require them. Make sure the transcript includes fall grades, or provide an explanation if they are not yet available.

Would you get disqualified if your essay exceeded the maximum length?

Yes. Reviewers may stop reading or remove your application if you do not follow word or character limits.

Would you get disqualified if your reference letter arrived late?

Yes. It's your responsibility to ensure recommendation letters are submitted by the deadline.

To get your application reviewed, it needs to be received on time with all instructions followed.

Sections of an Application

The Basics

The impression you create in your scholarship application begins early. Proper nouns must be capitalized, street names spelled out, your email address professionally appropriate. Seem simple? Double-check your work and make sure “texting” lingo isn’t present.

General guidance to get the most from this section:

- ✓ Utilize a phone number and email address that will be checked regularly. If a potential funder calls you, what will they hear? Your outgoing message should reflect positively on you.
- ✓ What is your email address? If your email address does not send a serious message about you and your professional aspirations, create a new account for scholarship and college communications.
- ✓ Carefully review information requests. “County” and “Country” are similar words but request vastly different answers.
- ✓ Capitalize the first letter of your first and last names.
- ✓ Consider your application your “interview”. What message do you want to send?

It is extremely important that questions on an application are not answered with “N/A” unless the form specifically indicates that response as a possible option. Scholarship providers ask questions and request information for specific reasons.

Academics

This section allows you to communicate how you’ve prepared in high school to attend the college of your choice. For students with high academics, this is an area where you can impress selection committee members with your grade point average and college entrance exam results. For students with lower grade point averages, make sure to use other areas of the application, such as letters of reference or your personal statement to communicate why your grades alone might not demonstrate your ability to succeed at college. Selection committees look at much more than a single factor when assessing a student’s scholarship worthiness.

Official transcript – This is provided by your high school or college. An official request needs to be made of them.

College entrance exam results – Many colleges and scholarships are now test-optional, and while the SAT can still strengthen an application, it is no longer a universal requirement. Students should check each college or scholarship’s guidelines before deciding whether to take or submit scores; at this time, WAEF does not require SAT scores

General guidance to get the most from this section:

- ✓ Send transcripts after the conclusion of your fall term. They must be current.

- ✓ Transcripts communicate your academic progress in school. Each year tells a story.
- ✓ If you are a running start student, make sure those credits and grades are clearly identifiable on the transcript. If not, include a separate transcript listing just the running start credits and grades.
- ✓ Explain your transcript; top grades are not always a requirement. You may be taking AP classes but aren't getting straight A's due to the workload and difficulty of certain classes or you may have personal or developmental issues impacting learning.
- ✓ Avoid disqualification by following directions.

Financial Assessment

Applications regularly request family income information when assessing financial need.

Generally, when requesting income information, the provider is seeking the household income. Household income refers to income included on the annual tax filing submitted by your parents or head of household.

Your college funding plan - It is also common to see questions asked about how much money you'll need for college and your plans to secure that funding, beyond this specific scholarship. **Demonstrate to the selection committee that you've done your research about the costs to attend college and are working on multiple avenues to secure the funding.** Utilize the "cost of attendance" report from your identified college/university to identify costs. Then identify how you plan to cover that total. Options include work study, financial aid grants, summer work, parent help, other scholarships or finding ways to reduce costs such as sharing a room, utilizing a lesser meal plan &/or not taking your own car to college. You can also show alternatives, such as if you receive a certain amount of scholarship funding you'll attend option one college, if not, you'll attend option two at a lesser cost.

Parent Employer – This is referencing the entity that pays your parent's salary, generally the name of a company. It is not the name of your parent's supervisor. WAEF utilizes this information on our scholarship application to help us determine which awards students may qualify.

SAI – The Student Aid Index (SAI) is the number calculated from your FAFSA/WAFSA that colleges use to measure your financial need. Some scholarship providers may also ask for your SAI on their applications.

College & Career Plans

Think of this from the funder's perspective: why should they invest in your future when you haven't given it any consideration yourself? Even if you just have general ideas, make sure to communicate your plans/interests.

It's possible, even likely, you may not have been accepted at your chosen college at the time scholarship applications are due or you have been accepted but haven't committed.

- If you applied to several schools, list them and note if you have been accepted.

- If you have been accepted and have made a decision, list only the institution you'll attend.

Major/Minor – Why would you believe this question is relevant when requesting scholarship funding? Funders want to know you have a purpose for attending college. You may also need to reply with a specific response to qualify for an award.

Career Plan – It may be a tall order to have a “career plan” prior to departing high school, here again share your thoughts about what your professional life will look like post college graduation. This may be specific, e.g.: “I will be working as a large animal veterinarian.”; or it may be more general, e.g.: “I have an interest in math and foresee working as an accountant or engineer, fields that would utilize my math aptitude.”

The college you attend or the career field you are considering may help you stand out to committee members.

Extra-Curricular Activities & Interests

This section of the application communicates how you spend your time outside of the school day. **The primary question answered in this section is if you're making good, productive use of your time. Use this section to share about your interests and activities.**

You'll want to showcase those activities that mean the most to you while at the same time, showing diversity in your interests and activities.

How do you do that? Use the entire space provided – don't leave anything blank. Many times, scholarship providers include a table or grid for you to complete. For those activities/interests that mean the most to you, show your involvement in multiple ways (example on following page).

General guidance to get the most from this section:

- ✓ Make sure if the way you spend the bulk of your time outside of the school day is fulfilling family responsibilities, you clearly communicate that through the boxes or narrative sections.
- ✓ When listing activities and employment, start with the current school year and the activities most important to you.
- ✓ Avoid using acronyms, even though you know what the club/activity is. For example: list Future Business Leaders of America, not FBLA.
- ✓ Many schools have clubs that just pertain to that specific school. When you put down a club/activity, make sure its purpose is clear.
- ✓ List employment even if it is not a paying job (babysitting siblings after school, working in the family orchard, etc.).



- ✓ Listing employment shows that you can handle mature responsibilities, work well with others and that you have a strong work ethic. It also communicates how you are spending time outside of the school day.
- ✓ If the application says “No Attachments” do not include a resume or other information as an attachment.
- ✓ Before you begin completing any forms, make a graph for yourself that includes each of your high school years and identifies the school, church, community, sports and family activities you were involved in that year. Use this to complete the application showing diversity and commitment to those you care about most.

Examples of how to list activities

School or community group involvement: List your extra-curricular activities (sports teams, church groups, music groups, clubs, etc.).

| Group | Description | Date or date range | Total # of Hours | School year(s) |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Church Group | Group that provides teens with a gathering place for positive activities | 4/12/12-current | 200 | 9 th , 10 th , 11 th , 12 th |
| Future Business Leaders of America | Club that helps to develop an understanding of business and develops leadership skills. | 9/5/11-6/10/15 | 250 | 9 th , 10 th , 11 th , & 12 th |
| High School Soccer | Member of the JV team 9 th and 10 th , and varsity 11 th and 12 th | 9/6/12-6/10-15 | 200 | 9 th , 10 th , 11 th , 12 th |

Leadership roles: List your elected and non-elected leadership positions held during your high school years. You should consider those through your high school, employer, community and church.

| Group | Leadership Role (describe role) | Date or date range | School year (s) |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Church Youth Group | Chairman of the fall fundraiser. Organized meetings followed up with committee chairmen and presented results to church leadership body. | 6/1/15-10/31/15 | 12 th |
| Future Business Leaders of America | President- conducted weekly meetings, team leader at club’s events, spokesman for the club | 9/5/13-6/10/15 | 11 th & 12 th |
| Future Farmers of America | Secretary- participated in club events, attended weekly meetings, wrote minutes for weekly meetings, wrote weekly newsletter | 9/6/12-6/10/13 | 10 th |



Volunteer work/community service: List the community service projects for which you volunteered and your ongoing volunteer work.

| Group | Activity | Date or date range | Total # of Hours | School year(s) |
|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Wenatchee Food Bank | Check-in individuals, prepared food bags | 10/14/14-3/1/2015 | 125 | 11 th & 12 th |
| Church Group | Clean the highway | Two days per year, fall & spring | 75 | 9 th , 10 th , 11 th & 12 th |
| Young Men's Christian Association | Camp leader- constructed daily events for participants | 6/6/14-9/1/14 | 100 | 11 th |
| Future Business Leaders of America | Blood Drive Check-in individuals for blood donation, provide individuals with snacks | One day in February | 32 | 9 th , 10 th , 11 th & 12 th |

Employment: List the jobs you've held during all of your high school years. Include traditional "paid" work and significant responsibilities in your family's home or business, even if unpaid

| Employer (Company Name) | Job Duties | # of Hours Per Week | Dates (be specific) |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Family | Pick up siblings from school and watch them for two hours | 10 | 9/1/16-6/10/17 |
| Farmer Bank | Teller- process routine account transactions, help customers fill out deposit and withdrawal slips, disburse money to customers | 25 | 6/1/16-Current |
| Farmer Orchards | Crew Supervisor- communicate task and deadlines to crew, assist crew members when needed | 40 | 6/15/15-9/1/15 |

Letters of Reference

The purpose of requesting letters of reference is to learn more about the candidate's character and values. **References should be provided by teachers, administrators, employers, clergy, community volunteers and others that know you well and can speak to things that matter to you.** Letters of reference should **not** come from family members or student peers, unless clearly requested on the application.

Utilize this opportunity! What is missing in your application currently that you believe the selection committee should know about you? A letter of reference that states activities, GPA and other information found elsewhere in the application is a missed opportunity. The letter of reference should be about you, your values and unique experiences, not about your activities and grades.

Prior to requesting letters of reference, consider what you want the application reviewer to know about you. Is there something about your background, learning style or maturity that you've not

had a chance to share elsewhere? What personal story would bring your application together and create a complete picture for the reviewer? Find someone to write that letter for you.

Read the two excerpts below. Which one do you believe is communicating about Maria's character and values?

Option One -

Maria Jones has been one of my advanced math students for the past two years. She entered my class hesitantly, not entirely certain she belonged in AP math. Maria's conscientious participation quickly identified her as a top contributor to class discussions. Maria asks questions elevating class discussion.

Maria's grades in my class are slightly higher than average; however, Maria knows the class material well and will leave the class ready for college work. She's developed strong study habits and her confidence has increased tremendously. Maria has a goal to be the first in her family to graduate from college; this goal is central to her life and all her activities.

I have no reservations providing Maria with my strongest recommendation. She is a worthy candidate.

OR

Option Two -

Maria Jones has been a student in my advanced math class for two years. In my class she has earned a B+ grade point average. She shows up for class daily.

Maria is also a member of our school's Future Business Leaders of America club and is currently serving as the club's president. As a member of FBLA, Maria participates in club fundraisers and organizes the weekly meetings.

Maria is a strong candidate for scholarship consideration. I give her my strongest recommendation.

General guidance to get the most from this section:

- ✓ Ask people that know you well that are not family members. If not otherwise specified, get references from different types of writers: employer, teacher, church leader, etc.
- ✓ Don't wait until the last minute to request your letters. Your letter writers will want to do a good job for you. To do that, they need time to work your request into their schedules.
- ✓ Is there something in the application that needs more explanation? Use a letter of reference to increase clarity. Do you have a learning disability? Have you overcome a significant obstacle? Were you recognized in a unique way?
- ✓ If your letter writer cannot meet the timeline of the application, find someone else. Your application will be disqualified if items are late or missing, even if "it's not your fault."



Essays, Personal Statement and Short Answer Questions

Stand out from the crowd! What makes you unique? What impact do you plan to make with your education? You are worthy of scholarship money – demonstrate it! Use these narratives to tell your story!

Personal Statement

Most applications will ask for a personal statement. Sometimes the instructions are broad—only giving you a word limit or format. Other times, the statement will focus on a specific topic or prompt. Always **read and follow the directions carefully** to avoid disqualification. No matter the format, your personal statement is your chance to let reviewers get to know you beyond your transcripts and activities. Think about your audience and choose experiences, values, or goals that will help them connect with you.





Essays and Short Answers

Essays and short answer questions are usually more focused. Be direct and answer exactly what is asked. Use these responses to show your **own voice, ideas, and values**, not what you think reviewers want to hear. Strong answers are authentic, clear, and stay within the word or character limit.

Important caution: Consider carefully the information you include in your personal statement and scholarship application. While scholarship organizations take steps to keep your data secure, remember that your application may be read by multiple reviewers. Focus on sharing your experiences, goals, and strengths, and avoid including personal or family details that you would not be comfortable sharing with a wider audience.

Using AI for Your Personal Statement and Essays

Your personal statement and essay responses are your chance to show scholarship reviewers **who you are**—your values, ideas, and experiences—in your **own words**. Scholarship providers want to hear your authentic voice, not a computer's.

-  **Okay to use AI like a tool:** It's fine to use AI for tasks such as checking spelling, grammar, or clarity—similar to a digital proofreader.
-  **Not okay to use AI to write for you:** Do not have AI create your personal story, generate your answers, or replace your own thinking. That removes your voice, which is what reviewers most want to hear.
-  **Best practice:** Write your own draft first. If you use AI, limit it to editing for readability, fixing typos, or helping you polish—not to generate ideas or sentences.
-  **Why it matters:** Reviewers can often tell when an essay lacks authenticity. The strongest applications always sound like the student behind them.

Additional guidance to form this section:

- ✓ Through the letters of reference, committee members learn what others know and think about you. The essay, personal statement and short answers are where you get to express yourself.
- ✓ Make sure you provide correct information. If there is a specific essay question asked, answer it. Don't just attach your personal statement thinking that will take place of the essay.
- ✓ Keep in mind, your essay and short answers could be the determining factor of why you are chosen over another candidate.
- ✓ Write to your audience. Selection committee members of a tree fruit industry scholarship might enjoy reading about your positive experience working or growing up in the industry.
- ✓ Write about yourself, your dreams & experiences but be thoughtful about how many times you use the word "I."
- ✓ Make sure your answers to the questions are to the point, don't ramble or use filler words.
- ✓ Write your essay and short answers with passion!
- ✓ Treat your essays and short answers like graded school papers. Pay attention to grammar and punctuation.
- ✓ Write your essays, personal statements and short answer responses in Microsoft Word or similar word processing software that allows you to spell check and read your information on a full screen. Then copy and paste to the application. Keep copies of all work submitted; you may be able to reuse them on other applications.
- ✓ Read your essays, short answer responses and personal statement as one group for each application. Will the reader have the right impression of the items that matter to you after they read this group?
- ✓ Proofread! Read your essay and short answer questions aloud. Ask a parent, family friend or teacher to proofread your work. It is very difficult to catch your own errors, but others will find them; it's better if those are detected prior to submitting your application.
- ✓ **What is the required length, maximum and minimum, of the assigned essay and questions? Not following directions is an immediate cause for disqualification.**

Top 3 Tips for Strong Writing

1. **Be Yourself** – Share your story in your own words. Authenticity stands out more than "perfect" writing.
2. **Stay on Topic** – Answer the exact question asked and keep within the word or character limits.
3. **Proofread** – Double-check spelling, grammar, and clarity. Ask a teacher, counselor, or friend to review it too.



Module Three

Do you think you're ready to submit your application? Take another moment to do a double-check.

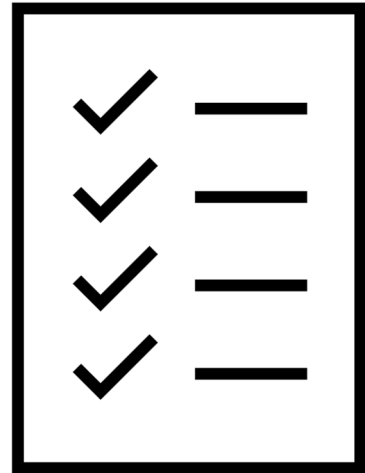
Proofreaders

Have you ever thought you turned in a perfect school paper but then got it back from the teacher with error marks? The reason for this is probably because a new set of eyes looked at it. This same mistake happens with scholarship applications. The consequence of an error on a scholarship application may mean several thousand dollars of lost scholarship funding.

Read your application out loud. It may sound odd but reading out loud forces you to say each word printed. This is where you may discover misspelled words (darn spellcheck!), missing words or sentences out of alignment.

Read your application from the perspective of someone that does not know you or your family. What impression will they have of you, your values, character and vision for the future?

Request one or more people review each complete application you prepare along with all attachments before submitting. Give each proofreader plenty of time to thoroughly look over your application.



Get More \$ for Your Efforts

You're a busy high school senior with limited time. Work smarter, not harder—organize your scholarship search so you don't miss deadlines and can reuse your best work.

Do your research first. Before starting an application, review the eligibility criteria carefully to make sure you qualify. Look for requirements such as GPA minimum, year in school, type of degree (vocational, technical, or academic), residency, or citizenship. Unsure? Contact the scholarship administrator or ask your counselor. *Tip: Don't rule yourself out too quickly—if you meet most of the qualifications, ask if you're still eligible. Sometimes scholarships go unawarded.*

Give your recommenders everything they need. Most scholarships now require recommenders to upload letters directly to an online portal. Make their job easier by providing them with:

- A list of the scholarships you're applying for and the deadlines
- Instructions on what they'll receive by email (so they know to watch for it)
- Your résumé or a “brag sheet” with your accomplishments, goals, and involvement, so they can write a stronger letter about you

Stay organized with deadlines. Use a calendar, spreadsheet, or the tracking chart at the back of this guide. Online portals often close automatically at the deadline—late submissions usually cannot be accepted.

Centralize your documents. Create a clearly labeled digital folder for all scholarship materials. Save essays, short answers, and personal statements with descriptive file names so you can quickly find and reuse content across applications. Draft responses in a word processor first (to check spelling, word count, and formatting), then paste into the online application.

Save confirmations. Keep a copy or screenshot of each application you submit. This helps if you need to reference details later or troubleshoot a submission issue.

Scholarship Tips & Recap

- 🍏 **Your application is the interview.** Selection committee members do not know you, your family members or friends and, in most instances, will not meet you before the award decision is made. Your application must sufficiently represent your interests, values, achievements and future plans. Take every opportunity to make a good impression.
- 🍏 **View your complete application as the entire package.** Everything you want people to know about you should be found in the application you submit.
- 🍏 **Start early & make sure it is complete.** Submit your completed application as early as possible and make sure all required documents are included. If there is missing information by mistake, this gives extra time for it to be caught and remedied before the deadline.
- 🍏 **Don't leave any area of the application blank.** It might be appropriate to use the term “Does not Apply” but make sure you think about why the question was asked. Remember, questions asked on applications are used by committee members to learn something about you.
- 🍏 **Brainstorm.** Take time to write down all your accomplishments, interests and activities. Think outside of what you do in school – include community, church and family activities. Ask your parents, family members, school advisors or others that know you well for help. After brainstorming, make sure you include a diverse group of items from your list in your application somewhere, stressing those most important to you.
- 🍏 **Review the application more than once.** Read all directions thoroughly and make sure all parts of the application are complete. Don't forget attachments. If the application requests an official copy of your transcript – make sure you submit an official copy.
- 🍏 **Use Microsoft Word to spell check.** Online applications might not spell check for you. Type the information in a Microsoft Word or other word processing document, spell check and then cut and paste into the application.
- 🍏 **Show that you can thrive at a college level.** Scholarships are competitive. Show that you deserve a scholarship and will utilize it to succeed in college. Do this by presenting a professional, thorough and thoughtful application.
- 🍏 **Proofread – Proofread – Proofread!** Not only should you proofread your work multiple times, a family friend, parent or school official should be asked to read each application and essay you prepare. An English teacher is a valuable resource! Reading your essay and short answers out loud can also help catch mistakes.
- 🍏 **Thoughtfully consider the information you share.** Carefully consider the information you include in your personal statement and scholarship application. While scholarship organizations take steps to keep your data secure, remember that your application may be read by multiple reviewers. Focus on sharing your experiences, goals, and strengths, and

avoid including personal or family details that you would not be comfortable sharing with a wider audience.

- 🍏 **Consider your audience.** Tailor the application for the audience. Think about what you are sharing and how it will be perceived. Are some things too personal to be appropriate?
- 🍏 **Spelling and Grammar Matter.** Don't shorten or abbreviate words. Also, don't use "texting" lingo. Capitalize when needed.
- 🍏 **Write a personal and specific essay.** Allow committee members to get to know you through a personal and compelling essay. Do not simply restate accomplishments mentioned elsewhere in the application. Write passionately in your essay and share with the committee something about you that will help them develop a connection to you. Even a simple experience can be powerful if you explain its impact on your life. Make sure your essay answers the question asked and it is written specifically for that scholarship application.
- 🍏 **Request letters of reference from people who know you well.** Ask people who can share about your values, traits or qualities that you consider worthwhile, such as your compassion, drive, leadership, honesty, independence, etc. A well-written letter from a teacher or supervisor at work who knows you very well is more important than a letter from someone with an impressive title. Coach them to provide specific examples in the letter that tell a story about you – how you overcame a specific obstacle, your compassion for fellow students, the difference you have made in the life of another, etc. It is generally not advisable to ask a family member or peer for a letter of reference and may result in disqualification.
- 🍏 **The letter of reference of the writer's affiliation to you is clearly stated.** Make sure it is clear who the letter writer is and in what capacity they know you. Are they your teacher, coach, employer/supervisor, etc.?
- 🍏 **Ask questions.** If a phone number or email address is provided on the application, take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions. This is especially valuable if you are unsure if you meet the application qualifications.

