# The ABC's of Scholarships Writing

## *Ingredients of a Successful Scholarship search:*

This process is not hard. If you can follow a recipe, you can read this manual. Before you start your search, read this entire packet and follow it carefully. This has to be one of your new hobbies. Just commit to it and give yourself plenty of time to follow all of the steps involved.
Good luck!

## 1. Myths: deconstructed

Many of us have grown up listening to all sorts of untrue statements about college and scholarships. In this section we deconstruct a few that we have heard. Page 2.

## 2. Getting ready!

How do you start? We will give you some tips about how to start this process in a way that makes sense. Page 3.

## 3. Starting the fabulous search!

There are many ways to start the fabulous search, we will give you a few resources here. Page 3.

## 4. Jumping in!

You just got to jump in and write some drafts. It is easy to do once you get going. We will give you some ideas about how to start. Who was it that said, "Ain't nothing to it but to do it" ? Page 4.

## 5. Using Your team!

That is what we are here to do, help you with your educational goals. You have heard the old saying it takes a village…. If you don't have a village to turn to, welcome to our village. Page 5.

## 6. Reach all of your deadlines...dot all of your i's

Become a master of time management and hit all of your goals. This is very important, we will tell you why. Page 6.

## 7. Reap all of your awesome rewards!

Once you receive any scholarships and financial aid, you still need to keep a good budget and pay attention to everything you have to do to maintain a solid budget. Page 6 and page 11.

## 8. Fabulous extras for your scholarship kit.

Pg. 7 Adjectives for Scholarship & Resume Writing
Pg. 8 Action Verbs for Scholarship & Resume Writing
Pg. 9 Request for Reference Letter
Pg. 10 Reference Letter Data Sheet
Pg. 11 Budget Worksheet
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Pg. 14-16 Scholarship Resources & Links

# 1. Myths deconstructed

***Scholarships will come to you only if you excel in sports or grades...*****No. T.V. would have you believe that scholarships just magically come to you or that they only come to people who play sports really well or get straight A's. What you do need is commitment & willingness to complete the requirements for each scholarship.**

*There are only a few scholarships out there…*

Wrong. Soo many sites and so little time…. so start early and get ready to search online, in counselor offices and on school websites. More search info will be given on page 5 and 14-16 of this packet.

***But you have to be an excellent writer...*****Nope. If you are not a great writer, find someone who can help you with that process. Many of us have jobs dedicated to help you with that process for free. More info on 5.**

*What if I haven't done a zillion hours of community service?*

Not all scholarships have this as a criteria. However if they do and you have not gone out into the community, you should do so now. Just remember to do a great job. When you do so, you are an asset to your community and an excellent candidate for a great letter of recommendation. Remember it is not necessarily the quantity of work that you do but the quality of your work and your ability to articulate it in your application materials.

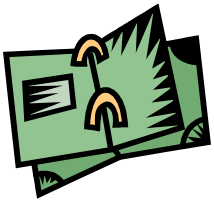
**So, be fearless, be organized and get ready to write and work with others to hand in fantastic scholarship applications. It is way easier than it looks! Read this entire packet to get ready to begin your search.**

# 2. Getting ready:

- Keep an active lookout for free scholarship workshops.
- Choose a secure place to keep all your scholarship info: I like the old school, notebook and dividers kind of set-up.
- We highly recommend that you purchase a thumb drive just for scholarship documents: for all rough drafts and final letters and searches. Keep a back-up copy on your hard drive.

- Use a calendar for tracking application due dates: you will probably be turning in lots of letters at different times. Free Calendars available on Google.

- Make copies of awards or certificates you have received. Make sure these copies are readable.
- Complete a budget worksheet. Once you get it you have to mange it. How much money will you need for your college experience? More info on page 11.



- Do your homework: Check to see if there are resources around your school that are there to help you with the search process. Our office for example, will help you even if you choose not to attend our school. Our info is on page 13.
- Have you done your FAFSA? (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid) The earlier you complete the application, the more likely you are to receive any aid you qualify for. Many scholarships and financial aid offices require this information in order to give you any aid. will only award you if you have done this paperwork. This can be completed as early as January 1 for the next fall.

# 3. Starting the fabulous search!

- Start your scholarship search: you can search on the web, through businesses and Libraries. Check out our list of resources on pages 14 through 16 of this manual.
- Is there a member of the family that belongs to a professional club or has been in the military? You would be surprised at how many organizations and businesses have scholarships for family members.
- Typically, any company that asks for money upfront to find financial resources for you should be considered suspicious, be wary of scams.

# 4. Jumping in

After you do a scholarship search you will find that many scholarships require you to write a personal statement or essay. This will get easier and easier to write and you usually just have to write one master letter which you can tweak to fit the criteria that each scholarship application requires. Your personal letter is also a handy reference for the people who will be writing letters of reference for you.

Answer the following questions to draft a personal essay:

What is special/unique about yourself? What is your passion? What are your strengths?

Write about your family and what challenges/successes you had growing up that shaped who you are today.

By what date do you hope/plan to complete your degree?

What awards/honors/distinctions have you received?

Describe your community volunteer experiences.

List your school offices/activities/clubs.

In what ways will this scholarship assist you in continuing your education and meeting your goals?

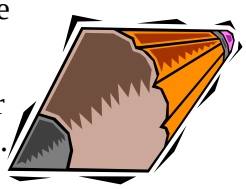
What degree are you pursuing? (you do not need to know this, but if you do...write about it).

What is your major field of study? And why (is there something you are sort of drawn to?)

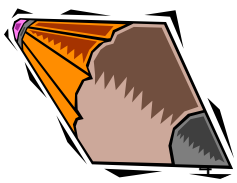
Describe your career goals. (again, you might not have any at this point)

What makes you a good candidate for success in your chosen field?

- When writing your letter of application, remember that your job is to help the reader justify awarding you this particular scholarship.
- Follow any instructions carefully and provide what is asked of you. Make sure you know your audience. What are the mission and goals of the organization? In your essay address what makes you a good candidate for this scholarship. Applicants sometimes make the mistake of just photocopying an old letter, some even forget to change the title of the scholarship they are applying to. Be aware that this will be noticed and will affect the success of your application.



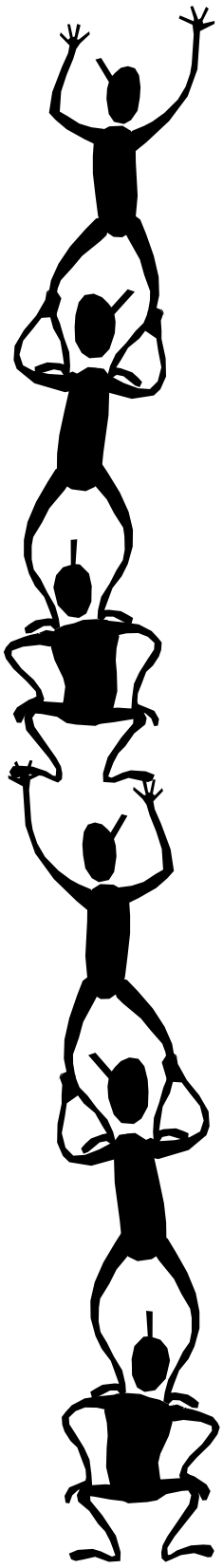
- When writing for application forms and information, remember that your letter is a reflection of you. The letter should be clear, concise, well-written and neat. No typos, no slang, no smudges, no wrinkles.
- Present yourself in the best light, but be honest, be humble. Many applicants actually do themselves a disservice by acting like they are the most awesome people in the world. Talk about why you do good things, let the good things speak for themselves. Be sure you include the skills you are learning and hoping to continue to develop.



- Get copies of your transcripts, if needed (also well in advance).

# 5. Using Your team!

Most scholarships are highly competitive. Do your best and do not hesitate to ask your faculty, advisors and parents for advice. If you do not have people in your area to get help from, you can always get help from First Peoples Advising Services.



- Ask for letters of recommendation (do this well in advance): From people you know who have seen you do excellent work. Trust us, people hate to be rushed and you cannot expect people to do their best writing in a day or two squeezed into their already-tight schedules. Ask people as early as possible (a month or two in advance) and remind them later, closer to the due date.

- Many scholarships organizations may require a particular kind of letter of reference; they may send you a special form or ask for a confidential letter.

- Have you written your resume? Those who are writing a letter for you will be greatly assisted if you provide a resume and personal statement from you. Check out the handy lists of adjectives and action verbs to help you write scholarships and resumes on pages 7 and 8.

- Type your applications, essays and letters; be sure to check for spelling, grammar and punctuation. Have a few people proofread them.

- Go to your school's Writing Center to get help with your drafts and revisions. Also ask for help from your advisors, trusted teachers or community leaders.

- Talk to other students that are applying for scholarships—start a scholarship club!

- Send thank you notes for each letter of recommendation received and to people who helped you proofread and edit your applications.

# 6. Reach all of your deadlines...dot all of your i's

You have got to reach all of your deadlines from handing in your college applications to your FAFSA to all of your scholarship applications. Buy a planner if you do not already have one and just stay organized.

- Get copies of your transcripts, if needed (also well in advance).
- Many scholarships have early application deadlines. Be sure to note the deadlines and requirements for each scholarship.
- Make copies of all parts of the application and recommendation letters.
- Remember to sign your all of your letters and applications and provide the necessary postage.
- Try and send all of the materials requested as a package. That means send in your application, letters of recommendation and other materials requested as a complete packet, not separately.
- Allow for mail delays in meeting deadlines.
- Send or deliver all of the applications on time. Many if not all, will not be looked at if they are late.
- Keep a record of when you sent or delivered the application.

# 7. Reap all of your awesome rewards!

You will begin to receive notices and letters of your rewards. Keep track of them and figure out when the money will come. Most likely it will come directly to the school of your choice. Rarely will it come directly to you. Some are quite specific and many come in prescribed chunks like a certain amount of money each quarter. You have to keep track of this, because sometimes there is a glitch in the paperwork and you have to call the organization to figure out what is going on. So stay organized !

- Keep track of all scholarships you receive.
- Send thank you notes for each award received.
- Ask about the procedure for keeping the scholarship. Do you have to send something every quarter to the organization that awarded it to you? Is there a thank you reception you have to go to?
- Do you have to send proof of credit every quarter ? Do you have to go through a re-application process if it is awarded over multiple quarters or years?
- Notify the financial aid office of the college you will attend of all scholarships you received.
- Check out the budget worksheet on page 11 to help you decide how much money to spend on what each week.

# 8. Adjectives for Scholarship/Resume Writing

For many of us it is hard to talk about ourselves because it seems arrogant. Actually this kind of writing is not about making ourselves seem perfect. It is about describing who we are and what our values and goals are. To help you do this, here is a list of adjectives that may help describe you and your personality.

aggressive
attentive
bold
cheerful
clever
compassionate
confident
cooperative
courageous
daring
dauntless
dependable
determined
dreamer
dynamic
eager
earnest
energetic
ethical
fearless
friendly
helpful
honest
hopeful
idealistic
industrious
influential
intelligent
intuitive
kind
leader
lively
motivated
opinionated
optimistic
patient
persistent
risk-taker
scrupulous
shrewd
sincere
smart
spirited
strong-willed
stubborn
supportive
sympathetic
tenacious
tender
tolerant
trustworthy
understanding
virtuous
visionary

# 9. Action Verbs for Scholarship/Resume writing

achieved
acted
adapted
addressed
administered
advised
analyzed
anticipated
arbitrated
ascertained
assembled
assessed
attained
audited
arranged
budgeted
built
calculated
charted
checked
classified
coached
collected
Communicated
complied
completed
composed
computed
Conceptualized
conducted
constructed
conserved
controlled
coordinated
copied
counseled
created
decided
defined
delivered
designed
detailed
detected
determined
developed
devised
diagnosed
directed
discovered
dispensed
displayed
disproved
dissected
distributed
diverted
dramatized
drew
drove
dug
edited
eliminated
emphasized
enforced
established
estimated
evaluated
examined
explained
expanded
experimented
expressed
extracted
filed
financed
fixed
followed
formulated
gathered
gave
generated
got
guided
had responsibility for
handled
headed
helped
hypothesizes
identified
illustrated
imagined
implemented
improved
improvised
increased
influenced
informed
initiated
innovated
inspected
inspired
installed
instituted
instructed
integrated
interpreted
interviewed
invented
inventoried
investigated
judged
kept
lectured
lead
learned
lifted
listened
logged
made
maintained
managed
manipulated
meditated
memorized
met
monitored
motivated
navigated
negotiated
observed
obtained
offered
operated
ordered
organized
originated
oversaw
painted
perceived
performed
persuaded
photographed
piloted
planned
played
predicted
prepared
prescribed
presented
printed
processed
produced
programmed
projected
promoted
proof-read
protected
provided
publicized
purchased
questioned
raised
read
realized
reasoned
received
reconciled
recommended
recorded
recruited
reduced
referred
related
remembered
rendered
repaired
reported
represented
researched
resolved
responded
restored
retrieved
reviewed
risked
sang
scheduled
selected
sensed
separated
served
set
sat-up
sewed
shaped
shared
showed
sketched
sold
solved
sorted
spoke
studied
summarized
supervised
supplied
symbolized
synthesized
systematized
talked
taught
team-built
tended
tested & proved
told
took
took instruction
trained
transcribed
treated
traveled
troubleshoot
tutored
typed
umpired
understood
undertook
unified
united
upgraded
used
utilized
verbalized
washed
weighed
worked
wrote

# 10. Requesting a Reference Letter

This is a sample request for a reference. Please change accordingly. In addition to this request don't forget to include a copy of your personal statement and resume.

Date

Person's name
Street address
City state and zip

Dear *Person's name*,

I recently spoke with you about my scholarship process and asked if you could write a letter of recommendation for my scholarship application *(or applications).* Thank you for agreeing to write this *(these)* letter(s).

I am applying for the following scholarship*(s), (name the scholarships)*
*(Provide information about the scholarships here. For example: the Mark Blakely Scholarship is for a student in the fine arts who shows "talent, potential, and creativity.")*

I would appreciate if you would describe your impression of me and my work. For your convenience I have enclosed my personal statement, resume and information about my academic plan. I hope this will assist you in writing the letter.

The deadline for applying to this scholarship is_____. I would appreciate if you would complete my letter of recommendation by _____, in order for me to include it in my application packet.

Please send the letter*(s)* to me *(or allow me to pick them up).* Each letter should be addressed to the name of the scholarship(s), _____/

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns related to this matter.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

*Your name*
*Your phone number*
*Your email*

Enclosure:_____

# 11. Reference letter Data Sheet

Something as simple and concise as this data sheet will provide a clear sense of your background and who you are.

Name:_____
Academic area of interest:_____
Transfer college:_____Past GPA:_____
Name of Scholarship:_____
Date to be completed:_____

Activities

Leadership/awards/honors

Personal characteristics

Experience

Academics (course work, etc.)

Other

# 12. Budget worksheet

Well before you begin school you will have to figure out how much money you will need to attend. Your school's website will help you estimate what you may need. (Room and board means rent, food and light and power bills by the way). If you go full-time you will need more money for tuition and books than if you attend part-time. Make sure you know how many credits you have to take to get full financial aid assistance.

Most students operate on a very small budget each quarter, with only a few dollars each week for non-budgeted items. Some students work part-time job to help with living expenses. Students who do not keep a budget like this tend to run out of money right away and come up short before the end of the quarter. Don't let this happen to you!

Once you fill out this sample budget worksheet, compare the totals. Do your estimated expenses match your anticipated sources of income? Plan accordingly.

## Sample Budget Worksheet

| **Estimated Educational Expenses:** | | **Anticipated Sources of Income:** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tuition | _____ | Financial aid | _____ |
| Fees | _____ | Scholarships | _____ |
| Books | _____ | Parents | _____ |
| Supplies | _____ | Savings | _____ |
| Room & Board | _____ | Work | _____ |
| Transportation | _____ | Other | _____ |
| Personal Expenses | _____ | | |
| TOTAL | _____ | TOTAL | _____ |

(This is the lowest amount of money needed to attend school. )

# 13. Scholarship Application Tracking Sheet

This is just a sample of the kind of tracking sheet you should create for yourself. It will help you when you start applying for multiple scholarships. Many people only apply for one or two. Your number should be more like 10.

| Name of Scholarship | Required Material | Due Date | Date Submitted | Award Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bob Kelso Award | Transcripts<br>Letter of application<br>Three letters of reference | Jan . 13<br>Send by<br>Jan. 1 | | March 1 |
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# 14. Extra Tips and Timelines

**Check our website or Evergreen's for the FAFSA deadline.**

Submit a separate application for each scholarship you apply for.

Photocopies of letters of recommendation are usually acceptable.

**Also be sure to check the due date for Evergreen State College scholarship applications on our website or the Evergreen Scholarship webpage.**

**Timeline:** **During December/January this is what you should be doing:**

Choose and obtain commitments from three to five excellent folks who will write a letter of reference for you.

Start researching and get to know which scholarships you qualify for.

Work on your essay. **Draft, revise, and draft again**! Get help with this process!!!

Request your college transcripts if needed (this can take up to 2 weeks or more and may cost money ).

## A few more notes from First Peoples Advising Services:

Michele Elhardt and Trina Griffis are good folks to talk to at The Evergreen State College re: financial and scholarship information:

Michele Elhardt, Administrative Assistant: elhardtm@evergreen.edu
Trina Griffis, Program Assistant, Financial Aid: griffist@evergreen.edu

Remember, Raquel Salinas and Norma Alicia Pino (salinasr@evergreen.edu and pinon@evergreen.edu ) from F.P.A.S. are always willing to talk to you about your application process.

Library 2153

360.867-6467

www.evergreen.edu/multicultural

Many of the worksheets and tips from this document were borrowed from the office of KEY Services at The Evergreen State College. Many thanks for all of their work.