

12 Tips on Winning a Scholarship

12 Tips on Winning a Scholarship

What if you had all the secrets to winning a scholarship? Would you tell the world — or keep them for yourself? Nationally recognized financial aid and scholarship expert, Mark Kantrowitz, *does* have all the secrets, and fortunately, he's spilling everything he knows.

Kantrowitz has provided Fastweb with the top 12 tips on winning a scholarship:

1. Start searching for scholarships as soon as possible. Don't wait until spring of your senior year in high school to start searching, or you'll miss half the deadlines. There are many scholarships available to students in grades 9, 10 and 11, not just high school seniors. **Continue searching for scholarships even after you are enrolled in college.**
2. Answer all of the optional questions on a scholarship matching web site for about twice as many matches.
3. Use a free scholarship matching service like Fastweb.com. The Fastweb database is updated daily, and the site will email you notifications of new scholarships that match your personal background profile.
4. Look for local scholarships on bulletin boards near the guidance counselor of financial aid offices, or the library's jobs and careers section.
5. Apply to every scholarship for which you are eligible. Pursue less competitive scholarships, such as small awards and essay contests, since they are easier to win and the money adds up and helps you win bigger scholarships.
6. Don't miss deadlines. Use a calendar and checklist to get organized.
7. Tailor your application to the sponsor's goals. Read and follow the instructions carefully.
8. If you have difficulty writing essays, try recording yourself as you answer the question out loud, and transcribe the recording later. Most people can think and speak faster than they can write or type. Create an outline afterward to organize your thoughts.
9. Personalize your essay and be passionate. Write about something of interest to you. Make your application stand out from the crowd. Talk about your impact on other people. Give examples and be specific.
10. Google your name and make sure you have a professional online profile. Use a professional email address, such as firstname.lastname@gmail.com. Clean up the content of your social media accounts, removing inappropriate and immature material.
11. Proofread a printed copy of your essay and the application for spelling and grammar errors.

12 Tips on Winning a Scholarship

12. Make a photocopy of your application before mailing it. Send the application by certified mail, return receipt requested or with delivery confirmation.