

## **Use Scholarship Search Engines**

Scholarship directories can help you find scholarships and other financial aid opportunities based on your interests and achievements, as well as your academic and career goals. Some scholarship sites allow you to build a profile and will automatically match you with awards. Maximize your search time with the following scholarship search engines:

- Fastweb.com
- Scholarships.com
- BigFuture
- Going Merry
- Peterson's Scholarship Search

## **Diversify Your Applications**

Don't limit yourself by applying only to large awards. In fact, fewer than 0.5% of students receive scholarships worth \$25,000 or more. You'll increase your chances of earning an award if you apply for many scholarships with a smaller payout. Look for scholarships offered by local businesses and organizations, scholarships that are specific to your school or area of study, and other niche awards. Smaller scholarships can add up fast!

## **Pay Attention to Eligibility, Rules, and Deadlines**

Before you start writing your scholarship essays, you should be certain of their eligibility requirements, submission rules, and deadlines. This way, you won't waste time and effort on a scholarship you aren't qualified for, you can create a timeline for when your scholarship applications are due, and you can be sure your application won't be disqualified for failing to meet one of the stated requirements (hint: if your essay should be 500 words, don't write 510 words).

## **Write Power Essays**

Instead of writing dozens of unique scholarship essays, aim to write a handful of "power essays" that can be used across multiple prompts. This not only saves time – it also forces you to think more critically about your essay prompts (and how you can answer them), and you'll have stronger essays that will be suitable for a greater variety of awards. Some tips:

- Make a list of all your scholarship essay prompts
- Identify the major themes each prompt is looking for
- Group the prompts together based on their themes
- Brainstorm how you can respond to each theme group

## **Be Genuine**

When writing a scholarship essay, your goal is to present the strongest case possible for why you should be selected for an award over other, perhaps equally qualified, candidates. To do that, you'll need to be sincere in expressing your values and clear about your goals. Use specific examples to describe your accomplishments, challenges you've faced, and what you hope to achieve in the future.

## **Use AI the Right Way**

AI can be a great tool to get started on preparing your scholarship essays and academic profile. You can use it to brainstorm essay topics, look for common themes among essay prompts, help structure your essay, and summarize your skills and activities. It's important to remember, though, that AI technologies like ChatGPT are

a tool and shouldn't be used to replace your own writing – after all, if you won't take the time to write your own scholarship essay, why should a scholarship judge take the time to read it?

### **Read Examples of Winning Essays**

To understand what scholarship judges are looking for in a winning essay, read examples of other essays that have won scholarships and awards. Read them critically – see how the writer relates their essay to the prompt, try to identify how the writer expresses their personal values through their writing, and consider what qualities make it an award-winning essay. Try to incorporate those qualities into your own writing.