

# “I need a scholarship! Now what?”

There are thousands of opportunities out there for students—and the truth is, if it were that easy, everyone would have one. The trick is to commit to doing the work to make yourself a strong candidate, identify the opportunities that will work best for you, and follow through! **This work starts early**—most scholarships require recommendations, so spending time building a relationship with someone who will know you well enough to positively contribute to your applications *is just as important* as finding the right scholarship opportunity.

## YOU ARE YOUR BEST RESOURCE!

### COMMIT

Once you commit to this goal, your dedication will carry you through the sometimes overwhelming process. Look for opportunities from every angle—from your school, to your extracurricular involvement (before college and since college), the town you grew up in, to the town you live in now, where you’ve worked and volunteered, and so on.

In committing to this goal, you are also committing to making yourself a strong candidate. Develop relationships with those around you (advisors, professors, mentors, employers, etc.) who will be able to speak to your academic and/or professional strengths. Some scholarships require the recommender to be someone specific (i.e. a professor in your field); other scholarships allow you to choose. Either way, your recommender should be able to attest to your interests and potential, and should be able to describe your abilities in great detail. No one will be able to do this for you unless you allow them to get to know you!

### IDENTIFY

Universities will usually pool general information together for students (the Financial Aid Office and the Office of National Scholarships are great resources), as will some individual School/College websites. But don’t stop there—departments within each School may have specific opportunities, as might other University groups, such as the Alumni Association or cultural groups on campus. Find out more information by visiting their websites, or even walking into their offices on campus.

Next, take your search beyond your school. There are many professional resources online that compile useful information for students ([www.unigo.com](http://www.unigo.com) or [bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search)). Remember popular sites that may not immediately bring “scholarship” to mind, and take advantage of where groundwork has already been completed (i.e. [pinterest.com/scholarshipguru](http://pinterest.com/scholarshipguru) or [www.reddit.com/r/scholarships](http://www.reddit.com/r/scholarships)).

And don’t forget about the biggest database available to you: Google! Search key words describing you and your strengths—and look beyond just the first few site results. Be wary of “spam” sites that charge unusual fees or may not have your best interests in mind. Look for .org or .gov sites, or locally based programs. Awards under \$500 or those with higher word count requirements may look unappealing, but they tend to get fewer applicants, meaning you may have a better chance of winning!

Finally, look at resources beyond your school and what is available online. Sometimes visiting local businesses or contacting former employers can produce opportunities you may not have otherwise known about. Ideas include (but aren’t limited to!):

- Local businesses
- Churches
- Local civic groups
- Anywhere you volunteer
- Banking institutions
- Current or former employers
- Companies in your field

This should give you a good start—but now it’s time for the hard part... **FOLLOW THROUGH!**