

**How to Find and Win  
Scholarships and Fellowships**

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About the Speaker

- Mark Kantrowitz is publisher of Fastweb.com and FinAid.org, the leading free web sites about college scholarships and financial aid
- Mark is a member of the board of directors of the National Scholarship Providers Association
- Mark was quoted in more than 1,200 different newspaper and magazine articles last year
- Mark is the author of the bestselling book *Secrets to Winning a Scholarship*, available on Amazon.com in Kindle and paperback formats

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Overview

- Why Try to Win Scholarships and Fellowships?
- Who Wins Scholarships?
- Basic Strategies for Winning Scholarships
- Searching for Scholarships
- Tips on Winning Scholarships
- Pitfalls and Dangers
- After You Win a Scholarship
- Top Ten Lists
- Key Scholarship Resources

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**Why Try to Win Scholarships?**

- Private scholarships and fellowships will help you succeed in college by reducing your loan and work burden
- Scholarship winners are more likely to graduate and more likely to graduate on-time
- Among Bachelor's degree recipients, students who graduate with no debt are twice as likely to go on to graduate school
- Winning a prestigious award adds a line to your resume. This enhances your reputation and may open doors to educational opportunities

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**Who Wins Scholarships?**

- Very few students win a completely free ride
  - Of students enrolled full-time at a 4-year college
    - 0.3% get enough grants to cover the full COA
    - 1.0% get enough grants to cover 90% or more of the COA
    - 3.4% get enough grants to cover 75% or more of the COA
    - 14.3% get enough grants to cover 50% or more of the COA
  - Of students winning scholarships, more than two-thirds (69.1%) received less than \$2,500
- More students at 4-year colleges win scholarships
  - 8.3% of students at 4-year colleges win scholarships
  - 2.6% of students at 2-year colleges win scholarships

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**Some Majors are More Lucrative**

Major	Percentage Winning	Average Award
Math/Statistics	23.2%	\$4,059
Engineering	17.6%	\$3,075
Physical Sciences	17.1%	\$3,180
Life Sciences	16.9%	\$2,649
Education	15.0%	\$2,420
Health	14.8%	\$2,880
Social Sciences	12.7%	\$3,063
Humanities	12.5%	\$2,623
Computer Science	11.1%	\$2,974
Business	9.1%	\$2,828

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# Practical Tips and Best Practices for Counseling Students and Parents about Financial Aid and Student Loans

## More Students with Good Grades Win

Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) on a 4.0 Scale	High School GPA (% Winning Scholarships)	College GPA (% Winning Scholarships)
0.0-1.9 (D- to C)	5.7%	7.0%
2.0-2.4 (C to B-)	7.1%	9.1%
2.5-2.9 (B- to B)	9.5%	10.7%
3.0-3.4 (B to A-)	10.7%	13.1%
3.5-4.0 (A- to A)	18.7%	18.8%

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## Better Test Scores Mean More Awards

SAT Combined Score	Probability of Winning a Scholarship	ACT Composite Score	Probability of Winning a Scholarship
< 700	2.6%	< 15	2.6%
700 to 800	4.2%	15-17	4.7%
800 to 900	5.4%	18-20	5.6%
900 to 1000	5.8%	21-23	7.3%
1000 to 1100	7.4%	24-26	8.3%
1100 to 1200	8.5%	27-29	11.1%
1200 to 1300	11.2%	30-36	14.2%
1300 to 1400	13.2%		

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## The Race Myth

Race	Percent of Recipients	Percent Winning	Average Award
White	71.5%	14.4%	\$2,645
Black or African American	10.5%	11.4%	\$2,962
Hispanic or Latino	8.1%	9.1%	\$2,353
Asian	4.4%	10.5%	\$3,170
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.4%	32.7%	\$3,967
More than One Race	3.4%	16.0%	\$4,891
All Minority Students	28.5%	11.2%	\$3,167

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Strategies for Winning Scholarships

- It's a numbers game
  - Even among talented students, winning involves a combination of luck and skill
  - The students who win more scholarships also receive many rejections
  - To win more scholarships, apply to more scholarships, but only if you qualify
- You can't win if you don't apply
  - One in four students never applies for financial aid
- Don't miss deadlines

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Apply to Every Scholarship

- Students don't like writing essays and often avoid scholarships that award less than \$1,000, making these scholarships easier to win
- A few small awards can add up to big money
- Winning small awards helps you win bigger ones
  - Winning a scholarship adds a line to your resume
  - The practice can help improve your applications for larger scholarships and college admissions
- It gets easier after the first 6 applications
  - Essays can be reused and tailored to each new application

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Searching for Scholarships

- Start searching as soon as possible
  - If you wait until spring to start searching, you will miss half the deadlines
  - There are many scholarships available to students in grades 9, 10 and 11, not just high school seniors
  - There are even scholarships for students in grades K-8 and to current college students
- Use a free scholarship matching service like Fastweb for targeted matches
- Search two or more scholarship sites

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Search Offline in Addition to Online

- Online searches are targeted, offline more exploratory
- Look for scholarship listing books at the library or bookstore, but check the publication date
  - Books that are more than 2 years old are too old to be useful, since about 10% of awards change each year
- Look for local scholarships on bulletin boards near the guidance counselor or financial aid offices, or the library's jobs and careers section
  - Also look on the college's web site for scholarships
- Look in the coupon section of the newspaper

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Increasing the Number of Matches

- Answer the optional questions in the scholarship matching service's personal background profile
- Students who answer all of the optional questions match about **twice** as many scholarships as students who answer only the required questions, on average
- The optional questions are there to trigger the inclusion of specific awards in the search results.
- Look for near-miss matches

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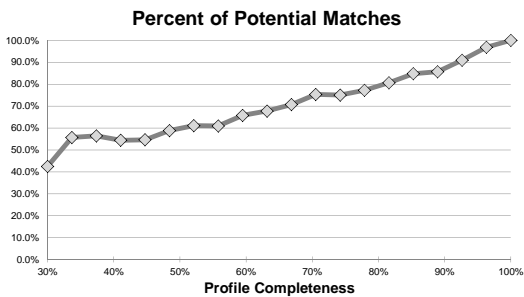
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Profile Completeness Matters




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Tips on Winning Scholarships

- Prioritize your applications by deadline and the expected value of the scholarship
- Use a calendar and checklist to get organized
- Create an accomplishments resume
- Tailor your application to the sponsor's goals
- Read and follow the instructions
- Make your application stand out from the crowd
- Ask to be nominated
- Practice on a copy of the application form

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Writing a Winning Scholarship Essay

- Answer the essay question orally and transcribe the recording
- Use an outline to organize your thoughts
- Give examples and be specific
- Personalize your essay and be passionate
- Write about something of interest to you
- Talk about your impact on other people
- Proofread a printed copy of the essay for spelling and grammar errors

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Evaluate the Essay You Wrote

- Did the essay follow the instructions and answer the application question(s)?
- Does the essay exceed any word limit restrictions?
- Has the essay been tailored to sponsor's goals?
- What does the essay tell the reader about the student, the student's impact on others?
- Is the essay interesting or boring? Does it tell a story with specific examples and anecdotes?

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Tips for Letters of Recommendation

- Ask the teacher whether she can write you a *great* letter of recommendation
- The recommendation should be relevant to the scholarship sponsor's goal
- Provide the recommender with a copy of your accomplishments resume
- Provide the recommender with a SASE and all required forms
- Thank the recommender for writing the letter

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Acing the Scholarship Interview

- Practice, practice, practice
- Videotape a mock interview and review the recording afterward
- Wear appropriate business attire
- Visit the restroom before the interview
- Brush your teeth and wear deodorant
- Cover up tattoos and minimize jewelry
- Arrive 15 minutes early
- Pay attention to the interviewer's name
- Be polite and send a thank you note afterward

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Telephone and Webcam Interviews

- Conduct the interview in a quiet room
- Use a corded phone, nor a cordless or cell phone, and do not use a speakerphone
- Clean the lens on your webcam
- Make sure there is nothing embarrassing within view of the webcam
- Look at the webcam when you speak, not the video of the interviewer

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Other Scholarship Application Tips

- Use a professional email address, such as firstname.lastname@gmail.com
- Clean up the content of your Facebook account, removing inappropriate and immature material
- Google your name to see what shows up
- Make a photocopy of your application before mailing it
- Send the application by certified mail, return receipt requested or with delivery confirmation
- If rejected, ask for the reviewer comments

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After You Win a Scholarship

- Understand your college's outside scholarship policy and seek adjustments to the cost of attendance or defer a scholarship if necessary
- If your scholarship is renewable, review the requirements for retaining eligibility
- Tell the scholarship sponsors when you win a major award or other recognition; say thank you
- Understand the taxability of your scholarships
  - Amounts for tuition, fees, books, supplies tax-free
  - Amounts for room and board, transportation and other living expenses are taxable

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Outside Scholarship Policies

- Every college has an outside scholarship policy that specifies how a private scholarship displaces the college's own financial aid funds
- The outside scholarship policy affects the college's net price
- The most favorable policies first fill unmet need (gap), then reduce the loan and work burden
- The least favorable policies reduce the college's institutional grants first
- If the college's policy is unfavorable, ask the scholarship provider for help

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**Beware of Scholarship Scams**

- If you have to pay money to get money, it is probably a scam
- Never invest more than a postage stamp to get information about scholarships or to apply for a scholarship
- Nobody can guarantee that you'll win a scholarship
- Do not give out personal information like bank account numbers, credit card numbers or Social Security numbers
- Beware of the unclaimed aid myth

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**Most Common Application Mistakes**

- Missing deadlines
- Failing to proofread the application
- Failing to follow directions (essay length, number of recommendations)
- Omitting required information
- Applying for an award when you don't qualify
- Failing to apply for an award for which you are eligible
- Failing to tailor the application to the sponsor
- Writing a boring essay

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**Top Ten Most Unusual Scholarships**

1. Scholarship for Left-Handed Students
2. Duck Brand Duct Tape Stuck at Prom Contest
3. David Letterman Telecommunications Scholarship
4. Zolp Scholarships
5. Patrick Kerr Skateboard Scholarship
6. Scholar Athlete Milk Mustache of the Year Award
7. National Marbles Tournament Scholarships
8. Klingon Language Institute Scholarship
9. National Beef Ambassador Program
10. Vegetarian Resource Group Scholarship

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Top Ten Most Prestigious Scholarships

1. Marshall Scholarships
2. Rhodes Scholarship
3. Winston Churchill Scholarship Program
4. Harry S. Truman Scholarships
5. Henry Luce Foundation Scholarship
6. Morris K. Udall Foundation Undergraduate Scholarships
7. Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program
8. Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship
9. Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Essay Contest
10. National Merit Scholarship Corporation

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Top Ten Most Generous Scholarships

1. Intel Science Talent Search
2. Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology
3. NIH Undergraduate Scholarship Program
4. Elks National Foundation Most Valuable Student Competition
5. Davidson Fellows
6. Intel International Science and Engineering Fair
7. Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships
8. Collegiate Inventors Competition
9. Coca-Cola Scholars Program Scholarship
10. Gates Millennium Scholars

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Top Ten Scholarships for Age 13 and Under

1. National Spelling Bee
2. National Geography Bee
3. National History Day Contest
4. Jif Most Creative Peanut Butter Sandwich Contest
5. Scholastic Art & Writing Awards
6. Christopher Columbus Community Service Awards
7. Dick Blick Linoleum Block Print Contest
8. Gloria Barron Prize for Your Heroes
9. Patriot's Pen
10. Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

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Top Ten Scholarships for Community Service

1. Segal AmeriCorps Education Award
2. The Do Something Awards
3. Comcast Leaders and Achievers Scholarship
4. Discover Card Tribute Award
5. Echoing Green Fellowship
6. The Heart of America Christopher Reeve Award
7. Kohl's Kids Who Care Program
8. Samuel Huntington Public Service Award
9. National Caring Award
10. Youth Action Net

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Top Ten Scholarships that Don't Need an A

1. US Department of Education
2. AXA Achievement Scholarship Program
3. Horatio Alger Association Scholarships
4. Ayn Rand Institute
5. Girls Going Places Scholarship
6. Holocaust Remembrance Project Essay Contest
7. Americanism Essay Contest
8. AFSA National Scholarship Essay Contest
9. Red Vines Drawing Contest
10. Community Foundation Scholarships

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Key Scholarship Resources

- [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
  - [www.finaid.org/scholarships](http://www.finaid.org/scholarships)
  - [www.finaid.org/websearch](http://www.finaid.org/websearch)
  - [www.finaid.org/scholarshipscams](http://www.finaid.org/scholarshipscams)
  - [www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams](http://www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams)
  - [www.finaid.org/taxbenefits](http://www.finaid.org/taxbenefits)
  - [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p970.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p970.pdf)
- Follow Mark Kantrowitz on Twitter at @mkant

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