

Ten Tips for Winning a Scholarship

Courtesy of the

Russell E. Train Education for Nature Program

A team of experts from the Institute of International Education of Brazil (IEB), LASPAU, the University of Florida, and World Wildlife Fund's Education for Nature program compiled the following list of helpful hints for use when applying to scholarship programs. These tips are based on years of experience administering international scholarship programs and participating in scholarship selection committees. We hope you will find them useful when seeking funds to support your academic program.

- 1. Plan ahead!** Keep a calendar of deadlines for scholarships. Some programs require that you apply as much as one year in advance. It can often take one month or more to get all the information and documents you need for a scholarship application. It is important you prepare well in advance.
- 2. Don't rely on just one scholarship!** Apply to as many scholarships for which you are eligible to increase your chances of winning one of them. Often winning one scholarship will help you win others.
- 3. Read *all* of the application instructions and the entire scholarship application before you complete it!** Not following instructions correctly will count against you in the final selection of scholarship winners. Knowing all the questions you must answer on the application will help you plan how you would like to answer each question and avoid repeating yourself in different parts of the application.
- 4. Make sure you are eligible!** Read the eligibility requirements carefully. Many programs have age limits, nationality restrictions, or are intended for specific academic fields. If you are not eligible, your application is likely to be disregarded and thrown away by the scholarship administrators. This is not only a waste of your time, but also for your colleagues who provide you with letters of recommendation for scholarships.
- 5. Know your audience!** Tailor your application to the interests of the organization sponsoring the scholarship. Make sure the goals you express in your application match the goals of the scholarship program. Your essays should speak to the selection committee. If you are applying to a scholarship intended for a specific academic discipline, such as botany or anthropology, the selection committee will be experts in those fields. You must impress them with your in-depth knowledge of the subject. Don't write about things that are obvious to experts. If the scholarship supports many fields, such as conservation and public health and engineering, the selection committee will probably not be experts in your field. You must educate the committee through your essays why your field is so important.
- 6. Know your competition!** All individuals who meet the eligibility criteria for the scholarship to which you are applying are your competition. Are you competing against others from your own country or many countries? Are you competing against people in other fields or academic disciplines? To stand out among the competition, you must tailor your responses to questions to show how you are different and better from your competitors.

