

TIPS ON APPLYING FOR STUDENT AWARDS

What are scholarships, bursaries, and awards and who offers them?

There are three general kinds of student awards. Scholarships are based on academic merit while bursaries are based solely on financial need. Awards are a combination of financial need, academic merit, or other criteria such as leadership skills, community involvement, etc. These distinctions are important because they mean **you don't have to have straight A's to win an award!** Student awards are offered by a wide range of people, from schools, companies, charities and governments to private individuals. Try searching for organizations and/or areas that interest or apply to you. For example:

- MuchMusic
- McDonald's
- Girl Guides of Canada
- Royal Canadian Legion
- Alexander G. Bell Association for the Deaf
- Automotive Industries Association of Canada
- Black Business & Professional Association
- Global Television Network
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
- Tim Hortons

Where should I look for scholarship and bursary information?

Start your search for scholarships and bursaries close to home. Contact the Centre for Student Success to see what scholarships and bursaries are available from NSCC, and more specifically, Burrige Campus.

Does the company or organization you, your spouse, or your parents work for offer any scholarships? Some companies offer scholarships to employees or relatives of employees and choose not to advertise outside the company. Check with the supervisor or Human Resources office to see if they know anything about scholarships or bursaries.

Do you, or your spouse, or your parents belong to a union or an employee organization? Check with the union representative or their office.

Are you or any members of your family veterans or children of veterans? Perhaps you belong to a lodge or a club that has a scholarship for members or children of members.

And of course, there is the Internet. Just doing a search on a search engine, no matter how Internet-savvy you are, will just lead to frustration. Use specific databases of scholarships such as StudentAwards.com and ScholarshipsCanada.com. They ask for detailed information on your background, interests, chosen college or university, and area of study. Usually these databases will not provide a complete explanation of everything required to get the scholarships due to lack of space. When you find a scholarship that interests you, find out more information either by contacting the organization who offers it or by looking at their website or print literature.

When should I start preparing my applications?

As you probably already know; prepare ahead of time.

Investigate early; see what is out there in the way of scholarships, awards, and bursaries. See what is required and when the deadlines are. It is better to know about an essay that is required for a scholarship nine months before it is due rather than finding out about it a week before.

What should I include in my application?

Before you start, compile a list of all the activities with which you have been involved. Anything that makes you stand out from other students applying for the same awards is important. Sit down with your family and discuss what you have participated in over the years. List everything you can think of no matter how trivial it may seem. Something that seems routine to you might be extraordinary to someone else.

- **Awards:** Were you the student of the month, student of the year? Did you receive an award for your extra-curricular activities?
- **Clubs:** What clubs at school were you involved in? Were you in any school plays or musicals? Did you write for the school paper or yearbook? Were you involved with a religious youth group?
- **Part-time Jobs:** Were you a cashier or clerk, babysitter, delivery person, waiter, yard worker, camp counsellor, painter, etc.? Even if you had a really menial job that you hated, include it.
- **Scholastic Achievement:** Did you get high marks? What was your average? Were you on the honour list? Which subject(s) do you excel in?
- **Projects:** Did you work on any large projects that you are particularly proud of?
- **Sports:** What was your position on the team? Were you the captain, co-captain, or manager? What skills did you learn?
- **Student Association/Government:** Were you the president, secretary, treasurer, vice-president, class or grade representative?
- **Volunteer work at school:** Were you a tutor? Coach's assistant? Office helper? Library assistant? Teacher's assistant? Technical support?
- **Volunteer work out of school:** Local hospital? Local public school? Local organization? Government office? Community newspaper? Sports team? Daycare centre? Nursing home? Describe your duties and state what you learned as a result of these experiences.
- **Co-op Jobs:** Where did you work? What did you do? What did you learn?
- **International Exchanges:** Did you travel abroad during school to study or volunteer? What did you learn about the culture?

After you have compiled your list think about how your experiences have contributed to your personal growth. Did they help you develop responsibility, teamwork skills, punctuality, or leadership skills? Introduce your involvement by assigning at least one skill or quality that you gained from the experience to the activity.

Make sure you know everything about the award before you apply for it - ensure you meet all the requirements and have included everything that was asked. Just like resumes, cover letters, and school essays, spelling, grammar, and sentence structure are very important in any kind of scholarship application. Proofread what you write. Keep it simple.

Finally, try to think of an application letter for a scholarship the same way you would think of a cover letter you might write when applying for a job. What makes you more deserving than someone else? Organize your thoughts. Take the time to figure out who will be reading the letter. If possible, address the letter to them directly. Above all, be polite. Thank them for their time in considering you for the award.

Adapted from *Rob Taylor* at <http://www.scholarshipscanada.com/tips/appl.asp>.