

The Early Bird Gets the Scholarship Dough:

How and why to start your scholarship search early.

For many high school seniors, by the time you are done with your college applications and turn your attention to scholarships, it's too late for some awards. The unfortunate fact is that there are a lot of scholarships with applications that are due in the fall. Whether you delay because of procrastination or because you are preoccupied with college applications, if you snooze, you lose.

To make sure you don't miss out on scholarships with fall deadlines, we recommend the following:

Begin your scholarship search during the summer of your junior year – or earlier. The number one reason most seniors miss the fall scholarship deadlines is because they do not start their scholarship search until the spring. Either on paper or computer create a master file of the awards you want to apply for, along with their deadlines.

Preview the future with scholarship search engines. Get a preview by filling out the profile *as if* you were a senior. This way you will force the search engine to show you scholarships that will be due when you are a senior. Just be sure to revise your profile with your correct age/high school year once you are done.

Start preparing in advance. For the scholarships that are due in the fall, make them a part of your normal homework routine. Work on them a little every day. This will prevent you from being overwhelmed and ensure that you don't turn in a hastily completed, last-minute application.

Reuse your college application essays for scholarships. You can save yourself some time by pulling out pieces from your college admission essays and reusing them in your scholarship essays.

Don't despair even if you do miss a deadline. The secret to winning scholarships is that you must apply not only when you are in high school but throughout college as well. Apply for the awards that you haven't missed and get ready for next year when, as a college student, a whole new door of scholarship opportunities will open to you.

When it comes to winning scholarships, the early bird really does get the worm – so start early to win more money. You have a busy life and a thousand things going on at once; if you carve out a little bit of time to work on scholarships now you will be happily rewarded with some money to help pay for school when you graduate.