



How to Put Together a MaineCF Scholarship Application

Most college applicants are busy with school and extracurricular activities, balancing a job, child care, and other responsibilities. Here are a few tips that may help you make the best use of time and energy in your scholarship search.

We can't guarantee that you'll get a scholarship even if you follow all this advice, but it should take you a long way toward putting together the best application packet you can.

General Tips

1. **Apply only if you are eligible.** Read all the scholarship requirements and directions carefully to make sure you're eligible before you send in your application.
2. **Watch all deadlines.** To keep on track, impose your own deadline that is at least two weeks prior to the official deadline. Use the buffer time to make sure everything is ready. MaineCF does not allow deadline extensions; *if your application is late, it will be disqualified.*
3. **Complete the application in full.** If a question doesn't apply, indicate that on the application by writing "n/a" ("not applicable"). Don't just leave a space blank.
4. **Follow directions.** Your application could be disqualified if you don't follow directions carefully.
5. **Supply all supporting material.** Make a checklist of required additional information as you read the application instructions. Supporting materials typically include an official transcript, letter(s) of recommendation, a copy of your Student Aid Report, and an essay. Do not use staples when putting together your application packet.
6. **Neatness counts.** Type your application whenever possible. If the application is available as a Word document or an RTF file, use your word processing software to fill it out. If you must handwrite the application, do so neatly and legibly—and *do not* use pencil.
7. **Make sure your application gets where it needs to go.** Put your name on all pages of the application. Pieces of your application may get lost unless they are clearly identified.
8. **Keep a back-up file in case anything goes wrong.** Before sending your application, make a copy of the entire packet. If your application goes astray, you'll be able to produce another copy quickly.
9. **Ask for help if you need it.** If you have questions about the application, contact Liz Fickett by phone, toll-free, at (877) 700-6800, ext. 1110 or by e-mail at efickett@mainecf.org.

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The Essay

1. **Know your audience.** Personal essays are not “one size fits all.” Write a new essay for each application -- one that fits the interests and requirements of that scholarship fund. The essay is your chance to show how you are the ideal representative of that fund.
2. **Think before you write.** Brainstorm to generate some good ideas and then create an outline to help you get going.
3. **Write to the prompt.** Don’t simply list all your achievements. Identify the big ideas in your essay and write about experiences related to that.
4. **Show, don’t tell.** Use stories, examples, and anecdotes to individualize your essay and demonstrate the point you want to make. Specific details will make a stronger impression for the scholarship judges.
5. **Keep it real.** The simplest experience can be monumental if you present it honestly.
6. **Originality counts.** The judges may be asked to review many essays. It’s your job to make your essay stand out from the rest. Be creative in your answers but be sure your essay addresses the prompt on the application.
7. **Neatness counts, too.** Make sure your essay is neatly typed. Unless otherwise instructed, double-space the essay and provide adequate margins (1" to 1 1/2") on all sides.
8. **Proofread carefully.** Do not rely only on your word processing software’s spell-check and grammar-check tools. Read your essay with your own eyes and be on the lookout for misspelled words or grammatical errors. Ask a friend, teacher, or parent to proofread it.
9. **Read it aloud.** Reading your essay out loud forces you to slow down and helps you to notice awkward sentences and spelling or grammar errors.

Before You Seal the Envelope

1. **Give your application and essay one final once-over.** Check for spelling, grammar, and factual errors.
2. **Are all your supporting materials included?** Go over your checklist and be sure you have transcripts, letters of recommendation, and anything else required by the scholarship application.