

TIPS ON APPLYING FOR STUDENT AWARDS

Adapted from NSCC handout and <http://www.scholarshipscanada.com/finance/article.asp?ID=1415&SectionID=9>

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

There are three general kinds of student awards:

- Scholarships are based on academic merit (grades)
- Bursaries are typically based on financial need
- Awards are usually a combination of academics, financial need, and/or any other criteria such as leadership skills, community involvement, etc.

**Some supporters use these terms interchangeably.*

These distinctions are important because they mean you don't have to have top grades to fund your education. Student awards are offered by a wide range of people from schools, companies, charities, churches, organizations, and governments to private individuals (i.e. memorial awards).

Some organizations and/or areas of interest that apply to you may be:

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

Where should I look for scholarship, bursary, and award information?

The first thing to remember is that this search is your responsibility. Guidance will not tell you what you are eligible for. Avoid letting mom or dad do it for you, as that does not properly teach you the independent skills of a future adult. **Deadlines must be strictly followed.** This includes transcript request waiting time periods (2-3 days).

1. Start your search in your own school.

Go to the Richmond Academy website, and under the Guidance tab, click on Scholarships & Bursaries. This is where all of the awards that students can apply for are listed, in order of deadline, based on community, post-secondary, provincial, and national supporters. They come from organizations that have contacted the guidance office.

However, do not fret that this is the only award money available! Some scholarships and bursaries that come through our guidance office are not for student application but are to be chosen by the school's Scholarship & Bursary Committee.

All of these award recipients are totaled and announced at the graduation ceremonies.

2. Look to your future post-secondary institution

The post-secondary school to which you've been accepted often offer entrance scholarships and financial need awards to first year students. Check on their website, their student services office, or you may have even been sent an email or mail package about scholarship and bursary information.

3. Look outside the box and into your community

Does the company or organization that you or your parents work for offer any? They may not advertise outside of company, so check with the supervisor or human resources office to see if they do.

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

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

4. Provincial and national support

There are several links at the top of the Richmond Academy Scholarship & Bursary page that will connect you to a variety of provincial and national scholarship and financial aid awards.

Just doing a search on any search engine, no matter how internet-savvy you are, will only lead to frustration. Use specific databases for scholarships, like the ones listed on the RA website, are the best place to look. They typically have you make an account, answer specific questions about yourself, your program, and chosen college or university, to match you up to eligible awards.

All of this takes time and effort, but if you want to win the prize, you must put forth the effort!

When should I start preparing my award applications?

As you probably already can assume, prepare ahead of time.

Investigate early; see what is out there (even when you're in Grade 11) so that you know what is required of you. Update your resume and have a general cover letter about yourself, your academic, school, and community accomplishments.

Once you are in Grade 12, start looking at the Richmond Academy website in September to keep track of awards, requirements, deadlines, and submission instructions (i.e. postmarked by, etc.).

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 insignificant it may seem. Something that seems routine to you might be extraordinary to someone else (i.e. volunteer work).

When applying for a scholarship you will often need to write a letter directly to the administrator to request more information, an application form, or simply tell them a bit about yourself. This is a great opportunity to show the administrator why you are the best candidate for their scholarship. Take some time to make this letter as clear, concise and informative as possible.

The following list will help you develop your ideas and create the most complete listing possible:

Awards: Have you ever been formally recognized for something? (i.e. honour roll, student of the year, an award for your extracurricular activities)

- **Committees & Clubs:** What clubs at school were you involved in? Be sure to include school plays, school newspaper and yearbook committee contributions, as well as any religious youth groups where you are a member.
- **Community Organizations:** Are you a part of cadets, 4-H Club, Boys and Girls Club, etc.
- **Co-op Jobs:** Describe your co-op opportunity and be sure to list what you've learned from the experience.
- **International Exchanges:** Did you travel abroad during school to study or volunteer? What did you learn about the culture?
- **Part-Time Jobs:** Explain your experiences and highlight your skills through these opportunities.
- **Projects:** Did you work on any large projects you are particularly proud of?
- **Scholastic Achievement:** It's not just about high marks when it comes to applications but what you have done with the subjects you have excelled in.
- **School Associations:** Were you involved with your school athletic association or fine arts council? Were you a student representative for a parent-teacher association or advisory council?
- **Sports:** What was your position on the school team? Were you the captain, co-captain, or manager? What skills did you learn?
- **Student Council:** Were you the president, secretary, treasurer, vice-president, class representative, or grade representative? Describe these experiences.
- **Volunteer work at school:** Volunteer opportunities do not need to exist outside of your school (i.e. tutor, coach's assistant, office helper, library assistant, teacher's assistant, technical support)
- **Volunteer work out of school:** Describe your duties and state what you learned as a result of your experiences at a local hospital, local public school, local organization, government office, community newspaper, sports team, daycare centre, or nursing home.

After you have compiled your list, think about how your experiences during high school have contributed to your personal growth. *Did they help you develop maturity, responsibility, teamwork skills, punctuality, or leadership skills?* Introduce your involvement by assigning at least one skill or quality 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. *Spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure are very important, as you are representing yourself as a deserving student through the application.* Organize your thoughts properly, and proofread what you write!

Finally, *try to think of an application letter for an award as you would for a job.* Take the time to figure out who will be reading the letter (your audience). If possible, address the letter/essay to them directly. **Above all, be polite and courteous.** Thank them for their time and consideration.

Now you are ready to write your letter. Here is a sample letter to help get you started:

Your Name
Your address
City, Province
Postal Code

September 19, 2011

Scholarship Administrator
Address
City, Province
Postal Code

Dear Scholarship Coordinator, (Address the letter with a person's name if possible, using Dear Ms. _____ or Dear Mr. _____)

First Paragraph: This is your chance to make a great first impression. Start by introducing yourself. Clearly state your main objective for writing the letter, i.e. 'I would like to receive more information about your _____ award.' Mention your current school and your future plans, i.e. 'I am currently in my last year at Applewood High School, and am interested in pursuing a career in _____.' You may also include how you found out about the scholarship.

Second Paragraph: This is where you highlight your achievements, interests or activities that make you a great candidate for the scholarship. Mention your experience or future plans that complement the criteria of the award. Explain how this scholarship will help you pursue your goals. You need to strike a fine balance between a matter-of-fact list of your accomplishments and an overblown extravaganza of accolades.

Third Paragraph: As the last impression, this paragraph is also very important. Mention that you 'look forward to receiving a response' or 'hearing from you.' Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your letter for the administrator's convenience and mention that the envelope is enclosed. Thank them for their time and remember to sign the letter and stamp the envelope!

Yours truly,

(signature)

Your Name

Last but not least, have your award application package weighed at the post office to ensure that it has sufficient postage. It might be heavier than you think!

Good luck!