Free Money Season is here!

Fall is indeed upon us, or as Financial Aid Coordinator Tony likes to call it — free money season. Autumn semester is when you need to renew/complete your FAFSA for federal aid eligibility for next year, complete the Ohio State Application for Special Scholarships, and begin searching for outside/external scholarships.

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID

• The most feared and misunderstood college application is upon us again. Starting October 1, the 2021-2022 FAFSA became available for completion. We recommend that you complete your FAFSA early, the earlier the better. If you completed a 2020-2021 FAFSA, you can login at www.fafsa.gov using the same username/email and password that you used prior and simply click on FAFSA Renewal. The FAFSA Renewal will preload much of your information from your previous FAFSA. You only have to update a few items doing the renewal such as your year in college, household size, number in college, and the financial information for the tax year 2019. Ohio State’s priority deadline is February 1, 2021, but do not wait until the end of January to complete the FAFSA. The earlier you complete your FAFSA, the earlier we can review it and update your To Do List on BuckeyeLink.

• Once you complete your 2021-2022 FAFSA, you’ll get the confirmation email from FAFSA but you will not receive any notification from Ohio State. We can’t start processing them until closer to the end of the semester (December). We still recommend that you complete the FAFSA early so we receive your FAFSA in the initial batch. Once we have your FAFSA we’ll review it and then make the updates to your To Do List for the 2021-2022 school year. If you then enroll in summer courses, your award package will be available in mid-April to help with summer tuition. If you do not plan on summer enrollment, your award package will be available in late-May or early-June.

• If you have not filed a FAFSA for this current school year, it is not too late. You can still complete the 2020-2021 FAFSA and receive aid for the 2020-2021 school year. In fact, if you complete the 2020-2021 FAFSA now and you are eligible for federal grants and/or loans we could still award those for this semester.

There is also the possibility that your FAFSA could be or will be selected for verification, especially if you were selected in prior years. We will put the verification requirements on your To Do List in early January and you can get those forms completed early and be done until the late spring or early summer when you have to accept your awards.

Please remember that if your FAFSA is selected for verification, your FAFSA is viewed as INCOMPLETE until the verification is completed, therefore you will not be awarded aid until the verification is complete.

Office Hours
(Subject to change based on university policy)

• The Office of Student Financial Aid is always open. If a question or concern comes to mind in the middle of the night or on the weekend or on a holiday, you have the option to email us. As we continue to move through the fall, we will have someone in the office all week. Financial Aid Coordinator Tony Dickman will be on campus in his office in the Student Services Building on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Tony will be working remotely on Mondays and Fridays and is also available via email and/or phone.

• As we enter the holiday season, please email or call before you make a special trip to campus to meet with someone in the office. If you have class and will be on campus anyway, just stop out but we recommend that you contact the office before making a separate trip to campus as Tony’s days in the office could be adjusted.

• If you would like to set up an appointment, we can do that. Email the office (lima-financial.aid@osu.edu) and we’ll get you on the calendar.

REMINDER

Check your Ohio State email account as well as your BuckeyeLink account on a regular basis. That “regular basis” needs to be more than once a week!
Scholarship Essay Tips/Hints

Most scholarships out there require a scholarship essay as part of the application process. The following will hopefully help you create an award winning/earning scholarship essay. Do not be shy or scared about asking for help, there are plenty of professionals on this campus who would gladly spend a few minutes proofreading your scholarship essay.

Mollie Allen of the University of Illinois Springfield wrote an article titled “How to write a scholarship essay step-by-step” (www.scholarshippoints.com/scholartips/how-to-write-a-scholarship-essay)

Choosing an Effective Scholarship Essay Topic

This is the most difficult part of the process for many applicants. How do you decide what to write about? The most compelling essays will provide insights into who you are as an individual. Consider what the essay tells the reader about you. You may think you don’t have an interesting story to tell, but you probably do.

Try asking yourself these questions to find your topic.

- Have you had to overcome adversity?
- Have you interacted with someone who inspired you?
  - How have they affected you?
  - How did you affect them?
- How have unexpected events impacted your life?
- Have you created or done something you are proud of?
  - One scholarship essay winner started a pickle business to earn extra money.

Topic Tips:

- Avoid controversial topics, such as politics and religion, unless the scholarship essay specifically asks you to write on these subjects.
- Even if you address both sides of an argument well, the reader may react negatively to the essay. It’s better to avoid these topics and chose something less divisive.

How to Write a Scholarship Essay

These tips may seem unconventional, but they can make it easier to write an essay for a scholarship competition or college admissions application:

Talk to Yourself

- Record yourself answering the question out loud.
- Transcribe the recording.
- Add structure by organizing the transcribed text into an outline.

This tip works because most people speak at a rate of 200 words per minute, while they write or type at 30 to 60 words per minute. So, the act of writing interferes with the flow of thought.

This process will also yield a more passionate and personal essay because you will say what you mean directly, without interruption.

Tell a Story

Once you have a topic, it’s time to convert that into something compelling. Think of your essay like a story, giving specific examples and anecdotes. This gives the reader a sense of you as a unique individual and will help you connect with them on a personal level.

If you talk about adversity, discuss how it has taught you life lessons or made you stronger as a person. You want your essay to stand out from the crowd and be memorable in a positive way.

Create Interest From the Beginning

Chances are, the person reading your essay has been reading a lot of essays. What can you do in the first few sentences to hook their interest? Is your essay about an unexpected event in your life, or an impactful interaction you had with someone?

This may be the most difficult part of writing a scholarship essay. If you find yourself getting stuck on your intro paragraph, skip ahead and come back to it once your first draft of the essay is done.

We can tell you first hand, after reading thousands of essays from our scholarship essay contests, that every student applying for a scholarship is in need of money for college. Don’t spend too much of your essay focusing on that. Review committees know you need money for college. The essays that stand out share a unique story or experience that is individual and memorable, and lets us get to know the candidate further.

How to Proofread a Scholarship Essay

Proofreading can be one of the most nerve-wracking steps! You don't want a typo to detract from all of the time and effort you put in to your essay. Try these tips for polishing your final product:

- Run spelling and grammar checks with your word processing software (always thoroughly review these suggestions).
- Proofread a print out of the essay. The change in scenery from screen to paper can help find new errors.
- Read the essay out loud, marking every place where you stumble.
- Each verbal stumble may be a sign of a problem in the essay. It might be a sign of a spelling, grammar or logic error, a problem with word choice or a problem with the flow of the essay.
- Identify and fix the problems.
- Repeat the process by reading the essay out loud again, until you can read it from start to finish without stumbling.

Have someone else proofread your essay as well. Ask a parent, teacher, school counselor, or other trusted individual to read your essay out loud and provide honest feedback. Pay attention to any remaining errors, and anything they may have found confusing.