

# Watch Out for Scholarship Scams

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Just as there are many scholarships, there are many scholarship scams. Although many sound legitimate and official, **BE CAREFUL**. Remember one cardinal rule: **If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.**

**You should be suspicious of an organization if they do any of the following:**

- Request payment of fee to apply for scholarships.
- Insist on your credit card number, any bank account number, calling card number, or social security number. If given a number, they could charge unnecessary fees or drain your account.
- Pressure you to act fast. "This offer will expire....".
- Request an advance fee to apply for a low-interest educational loan.
- Offer to apply on your behalf or claim to have an influence on scholarship sponsors.
- Guarantee scholarship winnings or search results.
- Have loose eligibility requirements.
- Charge you for a scholarship.
- Use a mail drop as a return address.
- Do not include a telephone number for inquiries or have only an answering machine at the number given.
- Send you a notification that you were selected to receive a scholarship for which you never applied.
- Attempt to lure you in with financial aid information in order to sell you something else (i.e. life insurance annuities, etc.).

Be cautious and remember that a toll-free number and official looking stationary are not signs of legitimacy. These things are easy to obtain. **Before you send money to an organization, it would be a good idea to verify their legitimacy by doing the following:**

- Contact your college financial aid administrator or high school guidance counselor.
- Check with the Better Business Bureau ([www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)), the State Attorney General's Office, and the State Chamber of Commerce in your state and in the state where the organization is located.
- Visit <http://www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams> to check the list of defendants of pending scams.
- Contact the National Fraud Information Center ([www.fraud.org](http://www.fraud.org)).
- Call the U.S. Postal Crime Hotline at 1-800-654-8896.
- Send email to [SCAMS@finaid.org](mailto:SCAMS@finaid.org) or fax a copy to 1-724-538-4502.

Take advantage of free sources of scholarship information and search services that are available through your public library, the financial aid office, your school counseling office, the internet, and *Student Outreach Services*.

