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## FastFocus: Scholarships

### How Are Scholarships Judged?

-- by Roxana Hadad

Wouldn't it be great to know what scholarship providers look for in an application? Take an inside look at how judges pick their favorites.

#### At First Glance

The judges' first evaluation of your application is a quick one—usually only 15 to 30 seconds. Even though it's quick, it's important: Most applications don't get past this first stage. To be sure yours makes it through, give your application one last review.

- Is your application complete? Check to see that you've included all the requirements.
- Is your application neat? An application with coffee stains or messy handwriting won't make the cut.
- Are all of the required documents included? Be sure you're not leaving out references, transcripts, photographs or anything else the application requires.
- Are all of the questions answered? Scan your application to see if you've left anything out.

#### The Second Cut

After an application makes it past the first round, the judges separate "OK" from "great." The applications that make it through are those that have thorough and well-thought-out responses.

Make sure your responses are complete and answer the question. It's very important that your grammar and spelling are correct, so check and re-check all of your essays.

#### The Final Decision

This is the most difficult part of the process for judges. They've narrowed it down to a few highly qualified students. Now they must examine and compare every detail of the applications.

According to Mark Davis, President of the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation, judges pay special attention to:

- **Academics**—It's important to have a competitive GPA. However, providers also consider how challenging your course load and school are. They also check to see if you're taking the right courses to reach your goals and how well you did in those courses.
- **Leadership**—If leadership is part of the criteria they're looking for,

judges will examine your activities. They'll also look for a range of leadership positions.

- **Service**—Some providers are interested in knowing what community service you've done. They'll want to know if you've been continuous in your volunteer efforts. If volunteer work is required by your school, they'll look for activities that go above and beyond the required service job.
- **Creativity**—You can show your creative side if you play an instrument, write stories, paint pictures or act in plays. Demonstrate your ability by letting the judges know if you've won any awards.
- **Special circumstances**—If you've overcome any obstacles to achieve your goals, the judges want to know about it. Let them know how you achieved all that you've done, in spite of the roadblocks you've encountered.

It's not an easy job being a scholarship judge. Unfortunately, each provider has only so much to give and must make a tough decision: who will receive the award. By knowing what's on the minds of scholarship judges, you'll have a better chance at being one of those winners.

Visit [The Winner's Circle Scholarship Handbook](#) for more expert advice.