

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION BEST PRACTICES

Presented by the United Suffolk Sheep Foundation

in partnership with the United Suffolk Sheep Association (USSA) and
United Junior Suffolk Sheep Association (UJSSA)

Wednesday, October 15, 2025,

8 p.m., Eastern/7 Central/6 Mountain/5 Pacific



WELCOME TO OUR WEBINAR



Brenda Reau - Michigan

President

United Suffolk Sheep Association Foundation

- About the United Suffolk Sheep Foundation.
- Why we're here and why this webinar is important.
- What you'll learn in tonight's webinar.

SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS ANY TIME



- Type your questions in the chat at any time.
- We'll address after tonight's presenters speak.



TONIGHT'S PRESENTERS



John Peck - New Jersey
United Suffolk Sheep
Association Foundation
Scholarship Committee Chair



Jeff Baumann - Missouri
Agricultural Educator
Savannah FFA Advisor



Kathy Krafka Harkema - Iowa
United Suffolk Sheep Association
Marketing and Outreach Chair

ABOUT TONIGHT'S WEBINAR



John Peck - New Jersey
United Suffolk Sheep Association Foundation
Scholarship Committee Chair

- How to prepare for applying.
- Tips for managing your time.
- Best practices for preparing your scholarship application.

PLAN AHEAD.

GIVE YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME.

- 1) **Start early.** Print or download scholarship application forms when they become available.
- 2) **Read the rules to know what's expected of you in applying.**
- 3) **Do a run through to record your initial ideas/responses.** Then keep adding to your application.
- 4) **It's never too early to start.** Even if you're a Freshman. Maintain records of your activities and keep your records updated so it's easier to complete applications when the time comes to submit them.

SEARCH FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Be curious. Search online, network with others and discover scholarships that may be available to you. Consider scholarships offered by:

- Your local school district. Ask your guidance counselor and educators.
- Foundations, honorary or memorial funds.
- 4-H, FFA and agricultural organizations like Farm Bureau and commodity groups.
- Service organizations in your area like Lions, Kiwanis or Rotary.
- Business organizations like Chambers of Commerce.
- Organizations you or your family members may be members of.
- For example, the United Suffolk Sheep Association Foundation.
- Post-secondary schools to which you may be applying.



BE YOU. BE TRUTHFUL.



- Be honest. Be truthful. Be professional.
- **Don't stretch the facts. It's OK if you don't have experience in every area. Each person is unique and so are your experiences.**
- Scholarship committees often can and do check references, and verify information, including online, on social media and by talking to others.

THINK AHEAD.



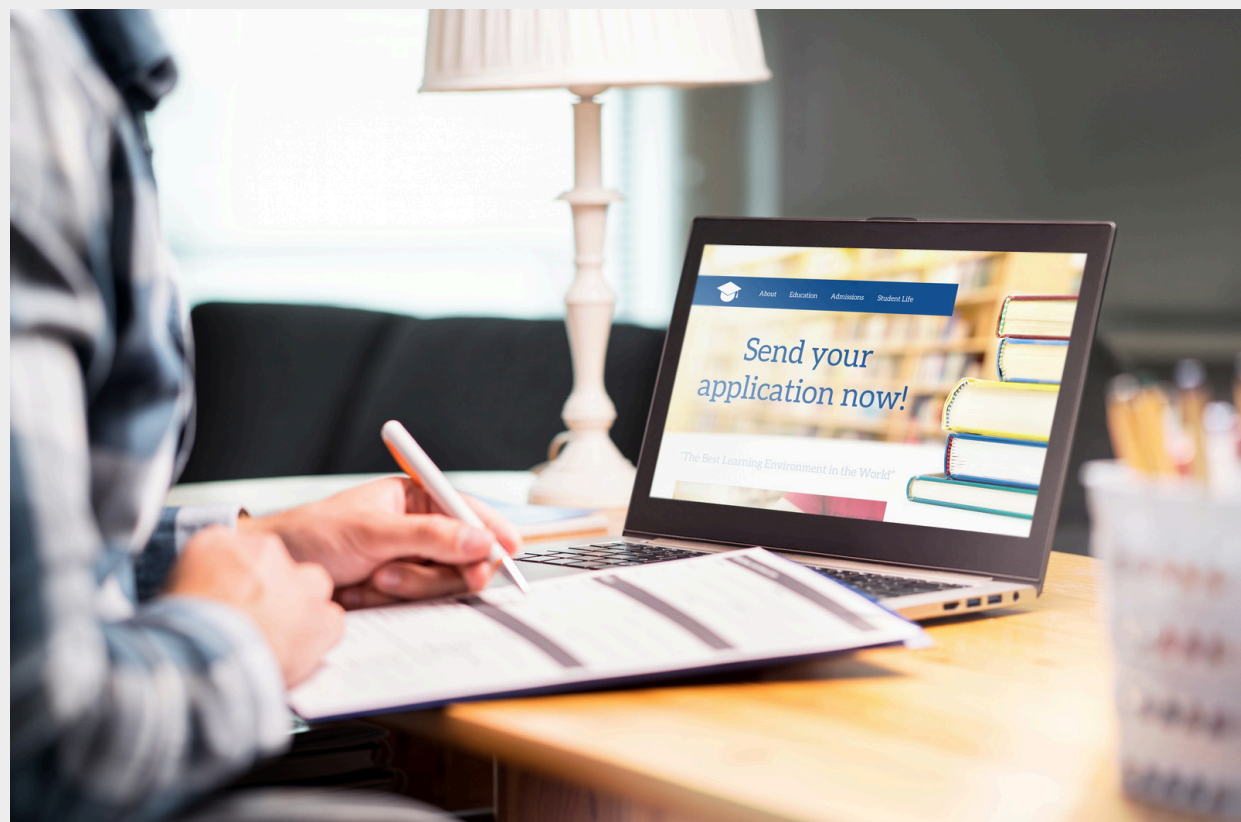
- Think about your future. Explain how a scholarship will help you achieve your educational and career goals.
- Answers to questions on your educational plans and career dreams help you stand out.
- Answer questions about your future plans thoughtfully.
- Be succinct, specific and make strong points.

CONVINCE THE JUDGES

- Your application should convey why you're qualified to earn the scholarship for which you are applying.
- How will a scholarship help ease your cost of education? What will it likely cost to attain your degree?
- Show why you're qualified to earn the scholarship through the information you feature in your application.



GIVE IT A TRY. APPLY!



- You don't know if you don't try.
- Give it your best effort.
- **Apply for every scholarship for which you qualify!**

WHERE TO BEGIN

- Jeff Baumann - Missouri
- Agricultural Educator/
Savannah FFA Advisor



READ, FOLLOW THE RULES

- Read and understand the rules.
- **ASK QUESTIONS** of scholarship program representatives to get clarification if anything is unclear to you **BEFORE** application **DEADLINES**.
- Read and answer all parts of essay questions.
- Failure to follow the rules could cost you points...and the scholarship.



TRACK IT!

- If you're in FFA, and your chapter uses the Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET) electronic record keeping program, use it to track your leadership and activities.
- See theaet.com for details or ask your advisor. Or track using your regular record book.
- 4-H members can track through 4-H record books.
- Not a member of 4-H or FFA? Or belong to other organizations? Track dates and experiences on a calendar, or create your own tracking spreadsheet or log.



BE ACCURATE

- **Don't count on only your memory. Write it down.**
- Don't fake it or over state it.
- It's OK if you don't have all types of experience or activities that may be asked for on an application.
- **Share your own unique experiences and story.**
- Honesty counts. State your role in extra-curricular activities and your entire application accurately.



IF IN DOUBT, CHECK IT OUT

- Make sure your application is accurate.
- **Check math and dates to make sure they add up.**
- Verify that subtotals and totals add up correctly.
- Verify dates, years.
- Verify names of events and activities you list.
- Verify correct spelling of names and your entire application.
- Research online, ask others to proofread, consult other documents to make sure you are conveying content properly.



BE SPECIFIC

- For example: Since joining the United Junior Suffolk Sheep Association in 2020, I have served as an intern, director, Secretary and now lead members as President.
- My career goal is to work as a large animal veterinarian in a rural area and raising Suffolk sheep.
- Skills I have learned include how and when to assist with difficult births, how to pull lambs, when, what and how to properly to administer vaccines, and how to select breeding stock to improve desired traits in my flock.

Rather than: I took part in many kinds of activities. I showed at a lot of jackpot shows. I won a bunch of shows. I do chores. I went to contests. I plan to continue to raise livestock. I don't know what I want to do but I may go to college.

TIPS FOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- Personally contact people who know you (and preferably are not related to you) to ask them to provide a letter of recommendation well in advance of the application deadline.
- Provide them with your your key achievements, career goals and interests.
- Provide them with information on the scholarship for which you are applying.
- Communicate the deadline you need to receive their letter so you have time to include it with your complete application.
- Limit letters of recommendation to one page, preferably typed.
- Ask them to sign and date the letter and include their name, their city, state, phone (including area code) and email address, plus how they know you, for possible verification by the scholarship committee.

TIPS FOR CREATING A POSITIVE IMPRESSION



- Kathy Krafka Harkema - Iowa
- Marketing and Outreach Chair
- United Suffolk Sheep Association (USSA)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT



- Attract interest. Your first sentence or list of achievements should be the most compelling.
- Write like a newspaper or online news headline to draw in the reader.
- Judges read many applications. Make yours stand out by leading with strong facts.
- **For example: Attracted 1,000 people who sampled American lamb at Alaska State Fair during August 1-5, 2025, cooking demonstrations.**
- **Earned Wyoming's 2024 State FFA Championship in Public Speaking emphasizing the need for more large animal veterinarians.**

CONVEY AN ACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL TONE

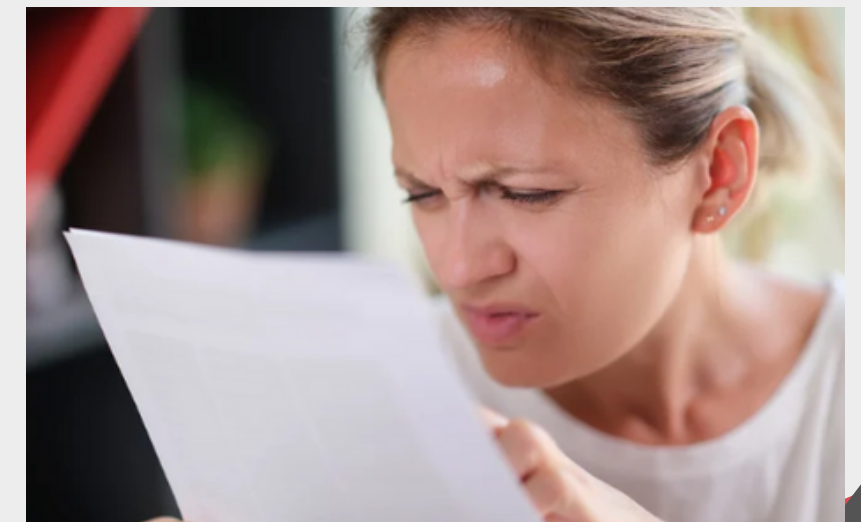
- Avoid being self-centered. Avoid starting every sentence with (I).
- Instead, start with active, rather than passive verbs to show specific action you took and what you did/learned/accomplished.
- For example: guided, implemented, launched, completed, conducted, designed, created, presented, exhibited, rather than, passive voice of “I was in 10 contests. I went to 5 events. I did it all myself. I am a leader.”



Leadership

LEGIBILITY COUNTS

- Aim for legibility. If the form isn't preformatted, choose easy-to-read fonts and type sizes.
- Arial is a an easy-to-read web-safe font.
- Calibri or Helvetica are also legible fonts.
- Aim for 10-12 point fonts, with spacing at 1 or 1.5 lines.
- If application form doesn't include spell and grammar checking, first type content in Word, spell/grammar check, then copy and paste into application form.
 - *Avoid script fonts that are hard to read.*
 - *Or tiny type sizes below 10 point that can be hard to read.*



BE AUTHENTIC. BE YOU.

- Be original. Be uniquely you. Write your own answers to questions.
- Don't use artificial intelligence (AI) to generate generic answers to questions. Judges notice when you sound like everyone else, rather than conveying your unique perspective.
- If you're interviewed, judges will assess if you actually speak and sound like your application.



EXPLAIN HOW YOU HELPED OTHERS

Convey how your personal leadership and volunteer experiences helped others.

- For example, mentoring, tutoring, coaching, leading, encouraging others.
- Volunteering to speak before others in your community or state.
- Assisting with community service projects as part of your youth association(s) 4-H, FFA, Scouts, church, school or other leadership activities.



CONVEY YOUR ADVOCACY

- What are you passionate about?
- What types of issues or causes have you educated or informed others about?
- How have you shown leadership as an advocate, educator or marketer?
- Share examples of how you communicated about issues or causes.
- Share examples of how your efforts informed and influenced others and achieved results.



AVOID REDUNDANCY

- Convey your unique strengths and experience.
- Be concise. Make every word count.
- If there's more than one essay question, provide unique answers to each, rather than repeating information.
- Make sure your answer specifically addresses the question and provides all information requested in it.



DON'T SPEAK IN CODE

- Don't assume everyone knows what an acronym stands for. Spell out acronyms on first use in your application, then use the acronym.
- For example: North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE)
- United Junior Suffolk Sheep Association (UJSSA)
- Total digestible nutrients (TDN)
- Estimated Breeding Value (EBV)
- National Sheep Improvement Association (NSIP)
- National Western Stock Show (NWSS)
- National Honor Society (NHS)



USE PROPER CAPITALIZATION, PLUS PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

- Use this: “a lamb’s”, not this “a lambs”
- Capitalize breed names. Use “Suffolks”, not “suffolks”.
- Use “my flock’s” to state attributes about your flock, or “my flocks” only if you have a number of different sheep flocks.
- Watch the spelling of breeds. It’s “Dorset” rather than “Dorsette.”
- Watch special characters. It’s “my brother’s” rather than “my brother@s.”
- Watch spelling. It’s “dried molasses” rather than “dryed molasis.”
- Know the difference between “a part” and “apart.”

FINAL STEPS: PROOFREADING TIPS, GET PROOF YOUR APPLICATION WAS RECEIVED

- In addition to electronic spell checking, read your application out loud to catch missing or wrong word usage, or wordy sections that can be trimmed.
- Do you see what I see? Ask at least one other person who's a good proofreader to doublecheck your application. Then edit as needed.
- **Why risk it? Beat the rush. Submit your application BEFORE the deadline.**
- Verify you are submitting to the correct email address or online portal.
- Blind copy your email when submitting your application.
- Follow up as needed to verify your application was received.
- If mailing, send by certified mail with a return receipt requested or with a tracking number if being mailed or shipped to verify receipt.

WHY RISK IT? SUBMIT EARLY

GET PROOF YOUR APPLICATION WAS RECEIVED

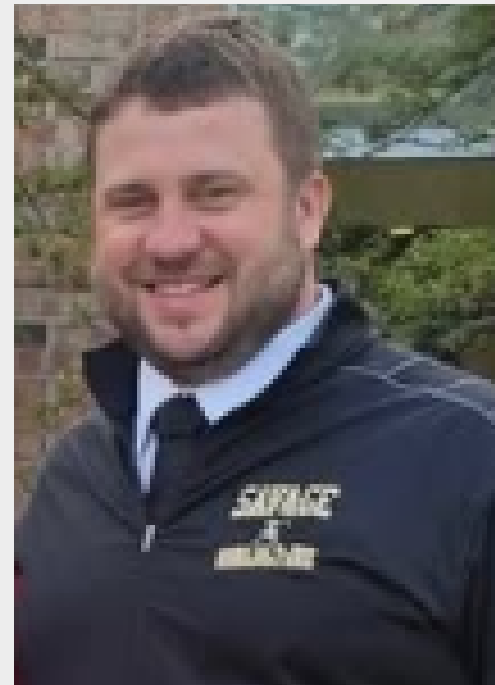
- Don't create your own crisis situation by waiting until the last minute to submit. The internet can go down. Power may go out. Email boxes may be full. You may type in the wrong email address.
- **Beat the rush. Submit your application BEFORE the deadline.**
- Verify you are submitting to the correct physical, email address, or online portal.
- **Blind copy your email when emailing your application.**
- Check for bounceback messages, allow ample time for resending.
- Follow up as needed to verify your application was received.
- **If mailing, send by certified mail with a return receipt requested or with a tracking number if being mailed or shipped to verify receipt.**



TIME FOR YOUR QUESTIONS FOR OUR PRESENTERS



John Peck - New Jersey
United Suffolk Sheep Association
Foundation Scholarship Committee Chair



Jeff Baumann - Missouri
Agricultural Educator
Savannah FFA Advisor



Kathy Krafka Harkema - Iowa
United Suffolk Sheep Association
Marketing and Outreach Chair

CLOSING THOUGHTS



- John Peck, New Jersey
- United Suffolk Sheep Foundation Scholarship Committee Chair

LEARN, EARN, RAISE SUFFOLK SHEEP

- Young people who raise Suffolk sheep can learn and build leadership skills through the United Junior Suffolk Sheep Association (UJSSA), a non-profit organization for junior members age 21 or younger. Annual dues are \$25. Visit <https://suffolks.org/youth.php> to learn more.
- Adults can register Suffolk sheep, take part in educational programs, shows, sales, and expand their markets as members of the United Suffolk Sheep Association (USSA).
- Learn about membership benefits: <https://suffolks.org/member-benefits.html>



FOLLOW, ENGAGE WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA




- If you're a social media Facebook user, follow us.
- @United Junior Suffolk Sheep Association - UJSSA
- @United Suffolk Sheep Association
- @United Suffolk Sheep Foundation



CONSIDER SUFFOLK SCHOLARSHIPS

- Thousands of dollars in scholarships are available through the United Suffolk Sheep Foundation, the MacCauley Foundation Scholarships, and the Royer Farm Scholarship.
- **Up to \$53,000 in scholarships will be offered in 2026.**
- **Applications are due by February 1, 2026.**
- Visit <https://suffolks.org/scholarships.html> to learn more.



Programs Supporting
EDUCATION • YOUTH • RESEARCH

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

The United Suffolk Sheep Foundation offers several scholarships for Suffolk youth. The application deadline for all scholarships is February 1st. If you would like to contribute to scholarships offered through the foundation, please contact the Suffolk Office. Visit the United Suffolk Sheep Foundation facebook page to learn more about scholarship winners.

THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK!

- For more information on Suffolk scholarships email info@suffolks.org.
- Visit <https://suffolks.org/scholarships.html> to learn more.

