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## Introduction

The Death Valley '49ers scholarship program provides four-year academic scholarships to eligible students in the Death Valley region. One or more $18,000 ($4,500 per academic year) scholarships are offered each year to qualified graduating high school seniors.

## Background

The mission of the scholarship program is to serve families who serve the park. This includes students whose parents or legal guardians work or volunteer for any of the following:

- Death Valley Conservancy
- Death Valley National Park, including Ash Meadows
- Death Valley Natural History Association
- Panamint Springs
- Stovepipe Wells
- Timbisha Shoshone Tribe
- Xanterra - The Oasis at Death Valley

## Eligibility Requirements

The policy of the scholarship program is to award one or more scholarships each year to applicants who meet the following criteria:

1. RESIDES IN THE REGION of Death Valley National Park.
2. PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN has been employed or has volunteered within Death Valley or the boundaries of Death Valley National Park for a minimum of two years.
3. FULFILLS ALL STATE AND DISTRICT GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS; having completed junior and senior academic years at any of the following:
    A. Death Valley Academy
    B. Beatty High School
    C. Trona High School
    D. Pahrump Valley High School
    E. Online or home school program that is both accredited by the state of residence (California or Nevada) and within one of the above district boundaries
4. SUBMITS A COMPLETED APPLICATION PACKET **no later than February 1** prior to graduation.

## How is a Scholarship Recipient Chosen?

You may wonder what type of candidate the committee is looking for and how a recipient is chosen. If an applicant's academic interests align with a career field in the National Park Service, that is a bonus. However, in the history of the ‘49ers scholarship program many other candidates have also been chosen representing a wide variety of academic goals and career fields.

An applicant can enroll in a trade school, a two-year program, or seek a four-year degree. All academic and vocational institutions are given equal weight by the committee; though, the chosen program or school must be accredited by an appropriate authority.

The committee seeks students who have the tenacity to finish their program. Grade point average (GPA) is not the only factor the committee considers when choosing a recipient for the scholarship. A hard-working C student who is active in his or her community may have an equal chance to be selected. The committee seeks an applicant with the gumption to complete his or her chosen academic program. While financial need is considered, it is only one factor in making the final selection.

After the application period closes on February 1, the scholarship committee convenes to review and evaluate the applicants. The committee then interviews potential candidates with the goal of selecting deserving recipients. However, the committee reserves the right to not award a scholarship in any given year if no suitable candidates are found. The committee also reserves the right to modify the criteria and selection process as they determine to be appropriate. The selection committee will announce a **decision no later than April 15**.

## Application Packet Requirements

To be considered for the '49ers scholarship, your application packet must contain the following supporting items:

1. Death Valley '49er Scholarship Application Form
2. Official High School Transcripts
3. Letters of Recommendation
4. Personal Statement Letter
5. Photo

These supporting items are described in detail in the following sections.

**Item 1: Death Valley '49ers Scholarship Application Form**

All seven sections of the scholarship application form must be completed and include all required signatures. If you are under age 18, a parent or legal guardian must sign. A PDF of this form can be obtained from the organization's website: **deathvalley49ers.org > About Us > Scholarship Program**.

**Item 2: Official High School Transcripts**

When considering you for the scholarship, the committee will review your official high school transcripts. A transcript is a record of your academic achievements throughout high school. It lists every class you took and the grades you received. If you attended more than one high school, you must obtain a transcript from each school. Ask your guidance counselor or administrator how you can do this. Make your request(s) well in advance of the scholarship deadline to give your school(s) time to prepare.

**Item 3: Letters of Recommendation**

A letter of recommendation tells the scholarship committee more about your character, determination, and personality. It is written from the perspective of a teacher, coach, supervisor, family friend, community member, religious leader, etc. The recommendations reflect the opinions of those who know you and can vouch for your academic abilities, work habits, volunteerism, or extracurricular activities. Ideally, the person writing the letter should have known you for at least two years. **Six separate letters are required**: two from your school; two from friends of your family; two from your community (such as an employer, pastor, or youth group advisor).

**Item 4: Personal Statement Letter**

Tell your own story. A personal statement letter is your opportunity to connect with the committee in a personal way. Introduce yourself: your background, your extracurricular activities, your accomplishments and milestones, your strengths. Explain what personal qualities you possess that make you a deserving candidate. Provide information about your academic and career goals and how you plan to achieve them. Share any additional information you think will be helpful to the committee. Your personal statement letter must be **no longer than 500 words**.

**Item 5: Photo**

If you are selected to receive a scholarship, the committee may wish to include your photo and a brief biography in the Death Valley ‘49ers newsletter or on the website.

Attach a full-color photo to the scholarship application. Also send a digital version of this photo, in JPEG (.jpg) file format, to the committee chair’s email address. You must complete and sign the photo release section of the scholarship application.

Your photo should be a recent passport-sized head shot, a minimum size of 2″ x 2″ to a maximum size of 3″ x 5″. The digital image should be no smaller than 2″ x 2″ at 72 dpi. The photo must be of you alone. Do not send group photos, out-of-date photos, or otherwise unsuitable photos.

## If I'm Chosen, How and When Do I Get the Money?

The $18,000 four-year scholarship is not paid out all at once; it is disbursed in equal payments at the beginning of each term. If you opt for a two-year program, for example, the maximum award is reduced to $9,000.

For a semester-based academic calendar, you would receive two checks per year of $2,250 each; one for the fall term and one for the spring term. If your school is on a quarter or trimester calendar, the payments are divided accordingly. No matter the program length or number of terms, the maximum yearly distribution is $4,500.

Payments are mailed directly to you at the mailing address you provided on your scholarship application. If you change your address, immediately notify the chair to avoid an interruption in payments. Inform the chair of any changes to your contact information; mailing address, mobile phone number, or email. The Death Valley '49ers do not send the funds directly to your school. The only role your school serves is to provide an official transcript as is required to maintain eligibility.

## Requirements for Maintaining Eligibility

To retain good standing in the scholarship program, you are expected to maintain certain eligibility requirements. You must check in with the committee chair at the beginning and end of each term. The chair monitors your academic progress and, if all is in order, authorizes your scholarship disbursement.

### At the Beginning of a Term

You must provide the chair with a list of your classes for the upcoming term. The chair verifies whether you are a full-time student enrolled in at least 12 credit hours.

**Maintain a Minimum GPA**

You must maintain a minimum GPA (on a 4-point scale) for each academic term:

- Freshman year GPA - 2.0 points or letter grade C
- Sophomore year GPA - 2.5 points or letter grade C+
- Junior and senior years GPA - 3.0 points or letter grade B

**At the End of a Term**

You must provide an official transcript of grades to the chair. Arrange to have the school send the transcripts to the chair automatically after each term. The chair will then verify whether you have met the academic requirements for that term. Failure to comply may put your scholarship in jeopardy.

In summary, to receive your scholarship money for each successive term you must:

1. Send a class schedule to the committee chair prior to the beginning of the term.
2. Provide the chair with a transcript at the end of the term showing that you attained the minimum GPA or better.
3. Confirm your mailing address.

## What Happens if I Fail to Maintain Eligibility?

If you fail to attain the minimum required GPA, disbursement of the scholarship funds may be suspended for the following term. If you are able to reattain the minimum GPA in the next term, the scholarship payments shall resume. If you fail to attain the GPA minimum for two consecutive terms, you shall be terminated from the scholarship program and forfeit the remainder of your scholarship funds.

**Requesting an Appeal**

It is your responsibility to request an appeal before being terminated from the program. In the event you appeal, the scholarship committee may take under advisement your scholastic results and any extenuating circumstances before rendering a final decision of either reinstatement or termination. It is important that you stay in communication with the scholarship chair. Any decision the committee makes shall be final.

**Reinstatement**

The committee may reinstate a recipient who has been suspended and who subsequently brings his or her grades back to an acceptable level. Suspension is not final; termination is final.

## Additional Questions?

Please address any questions to the chair of the Death Valley '49ers scholarship committee:

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Death Valley '49ers Scholarship Committee
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