



2026 AOPA FOUNDATION AVIATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You Can Fly Scholarships for H.S. Students & Teachers

Fall Application Period: October 6, 2025 – December 31, 2025, 11:59 p.m. EST | All applicants will receive a decision email by April 15, 2026.

Spring Application Period: April 1, 2026 – June 30, 2026, 11:59 p.m. EDT | All applicants will receive a decision email by October 15, 2026.

ELIGIBILITY

In addition to the numerous scholarship awards that help pilots and aspiring pilots take the next step in their aviation journey, the AOPA Foundation offers a special opportunity for high school students and teachers:

- **At least 90 You Can Fly scholarships of \$12,000** each for high school students aged 16-18 to earn their private pilot certificate.
- **Up to 20 You Can Fly scholarships of \$12,000** each for teachers using AOPA's high school aviation curriculum.

**Scholarship dollar amounts are subject to change without notice based on verified funding levels. The scholarship dollar amounts listed should only be used as an estimate.*

GETTING STARTED

Do I need to be an AOPA member to apply?

Yes. You must be a current AOPA member to apply. High school students, [click here](#) to learn about our complimentary high school membership or explore other membership options [here](#).

When can I apply?

Applications are open from **October 6, 2025, through December 31, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. EST** and **April 1, 2026 – June 30, 2026, 11:59 p.m. EDT**.

Important: If you applied in previous years, you must submit a new application each year and maintain current AOPA membership.

How do I apply?

1. Visit the application portal and click "Sign In" in the upper right corner
2. If you don't have an account, create a username and password (your AOPA credentials will not work in OpenWater)
3. Use an updated browser (Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, or Safari) for best results
4. Complete the General Application
5. The system will automatically match you to eligible scholarships based on your responses

Deadline reminder: Submit ALL supporting documents, including references, by December 31, 2025, 11:59 p.m. EST (Fall Application Period) or June 30, 2026, 11:59 p.m. EDT (Spring Application Period).

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

What must high school students submit?

All high school applicants must provide:

1. **Completed online application** with written responses
2. **Recent transcript** that includes 2025-2026 school year grades
3. **Two references** (details below)

What is a transcript, and what should it include?

A transcript is an official record listing:

- All courses taken during high school
- Grades earned in each course
- Your 2025-2026 school year grades
- Your cumulative, unweighted GPA (on a 4.0 scale)
- School name

Format: Unofficial copies are not acceptable. Do not mail transcripts. Upload them with your application.

Date requirements: Transcripts must be dated within the 2025-2026 school year.

9th-grade students: You may include middle school grades if needed.

Should I use a weighted or unweighted GPA?

Always use your unweighted GPA calculated on a 4.0 scale.

RECOMMENDATION PROCESS

How does the recommendation process work?

- Download the reference form from your application
- Send it to your references
- References complete the form (typed preferred, handwritten accepted)
- References return the form to you

Important: References must use the provided form. No email submissions or alternative formats accepted. Your references must complete the form by the application deadline: December 31, 2025, 11:59 p.m. EST (Fall Application Period) or June 30, 2026, 11:59 p.m. EDT (Spring Application Period).

High school students:

- At least one reference must be from a teacher, counselor, coach, or school official
- Your second reference can be from another teacher, school official, flight instructor, or any supervising adult

Examples of acceptable references:

- Teachers or guidance counselors
- Coaches or school officials
- Flight instructors
- Work supervisors

- After-school program leaders
- Civil Air Patrol leaders
- Youth pastors or church leaders

Who CANNOT be my reference?

Your application will be disqualified if you use:

- Parents or guardians
- Other relatives
- Friends your same age

Homeschool exception: Even if your parent is your teacher, you must find alternative references such as employers, activity leaders, or coaches.

What should my references write about?

Strong references explain:

- How they know you and their relationship to you
- Examples of your responsibility and leadership
- Your decision-making skills
- Your interest in aviation
- Why you deserve this scholarship

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

Can I apply if I've already started flight training?

Yes, as long as you haven't completed your checkride. If you pass your checkride before scholarship award date, you will no longer be eligible.

Do I need to be in a college aviation program?

No. You don't need to be enrolled in an aviation program or pursuing an aviation career to apply.

I have completed some flight training. Am I still eligible?

Yes, as long as you haven't completed your checkride. If you pass your checkride before receiving the scholarship funds, you will no longer be eligible for the scholarship.

TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS

Are teachers eligible for the You Can Fly scholarships?

Yes, if you meet these requirements:

- Current, paid, full-time employee of a school or school system during 2025-2026
- Currently utilizing the [AOPA Foundation High School Aviation STEM Curriculum](#)
- Provide a verification letter from your school district signed by a district administrator

Can teachers use these scholarships for advanced ratings?

No. The You Can Fly scholarships for teachers are specifically for achieving a primary pilot certificate.

Can I apply as a teacher who wants to learn to fly for personal reasons?

Only if you're teaching aviation to students using the AOPA curriculum. This program helps teachers become pilots so they can teach aviation. However, additional scholarships are available through the AOPA Foundation for teachers who wish to pursue a private pilot certificate or advanced training.

AWARD INFORMATION

How will I know if I've been selected?

Award notifications are sent via email to the address listed on your application. Check your email regularly!

How do I receive scholarship funds?

Funds are provided directly to recipients via a prepaid expense card, not sent to flight schools.

How long do I have to use the scholarship?

You have 12 months from the award date to obtain your certificate/rating and use the scholarship funding.

What if I didn't get selected in the Fall Application Period?

Don't worry, your application will be considered for the April 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026 application period.

APPLICATION RULES & DEADLINES

Can I submit a paper application?

No. All applications must be submitted online through the portal.

Are there exceptions for late submissions?

No exceptions. Applications and all recommendations must be submitted by December 31, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. EST (Fall Application Period) or June 30, 2026, at 11:59 EDT (Spring Application Period). Allow your references ample time to complete their forms.

REMINDER!

BE SURE TO REVIEW THE FAQs BEFORE EMAILING AOPA WITH QUESTIONS.

If we have not answered your questions here, please email FTscholarship@aopa.org.