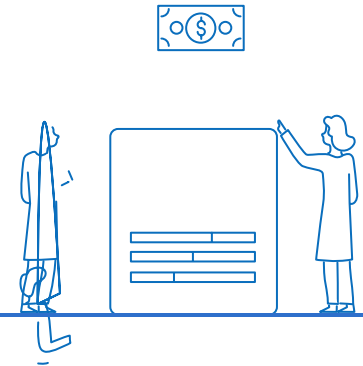


Understanding your financial aid offer



Congratulations, you've been accepted to college! First, celebrate this success. Next, figure out the cost of a ending college.

Start by reviewing the financial aid offer letter from each college you've been accepted to. This letter can come with your acceptance notification via email, separately in the mail, or can be found on your student portal on the college's website (if you're not sure, call the college's financial aid office). Each school will offer a different amount of money, so it's important to review this information with your family or a trusted adult.

Every financial aid offer letter is different, but the key terms are similar across colleges. Use this guide to help make an informed financial decision about where to go to college.

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Grants/Scholarships

Free money from the federal government, state, college, or outside/private organization that you do not have to pay back.

Loans

Money that must be repaid to the government or an institution (if you finish school or not). You can choose to accept the entire loan amount, a reduced amount, or none at all.

Federal Direct Loans

Subsidized Loans

- Up to \$3,500 for first-year students (can increase sophomore, junior, & senior year).
- Amount determined when you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#)).
- Interest does not accumulate while you are in school.
- You do not have to pay while you're in school. You receive a 6-month grace period after graduating from college or leaving school before starting to repay loans.

Unsubsidized Loans

- Up to \$5,500 for first-year students (can increase sophomore, junior, & senior year).
- Amount determined when you complete the [FAFSA](#).
- Interest accumulates while you are in school.

Private Loans

- Loans offered by a bank, credit union, state agency, or a college.
- Typically have higher interest rates.
- May require you make payments while in school.

Work-study

Money earned throughout the academic year by working a qualifying part-time job. This money is capped at the amount listed in your offer letter and will come in a paycheck reflecting the hours you have worked. This money is not directly applied to your student account, it can be used for books, travel, & other personal expenses.

Note: On-campus jobs can be competitive. If you're eligible for a work-study job it is your responsibility to find a job. While working during college can help with expenses, full-time students should consider working part-time to avoid having a negative impact on academics.

In order to compare the costs at different colleges and estimate the amount you'll have to pay, check out this comparison calculator from [The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#).

Still have questions? Visit [Federal Student Aid](#) to learn more.

Next steps

After reviewing your options and selecting the college you plan to attend, you need to accept your financial aid package by the deadline stated in your offer letter and complete any other steps.

If your financial circumstances have changed, or you are unable to pay the remaining balance expected for a college, you can appeal for more financial aid. Every college has a different process, so contact the college immediately if you need to begin that process.