



GREAT ADVICE FOR PARENTS 2021



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GIVING OUT GREAT ADVICE SINCE 2016

Every fall, we publish this guide in the hopes that it provides timely facts and information to help college-bound students and families make informed choices.

What we don't usually talk about is how to make choices in a pandemic.

And yet, for a second year, we are still navigating college decisions in a time of great uncertainty. Colleges are continuously updating safety protocols, families are still dealing with pandemic-related changes and losses, and a year of online learning may have shifted focus and attention away from college planning activities. These extra degrees of difficulty only add to an already difficult process for high school juniors and seniors.

Luckily, our friends at NerdWallet have been closely covering the issues that matter: what if my finances have changed, should I take a gap year, is college worth the cost, and what new questions should I ask myself when choosing a college, based on COVID-19?

We have included all of this information and more in this year's e-guide, continuing with our annual tradition of providing financial aid guidance while also promoting family discussions about the college selection process. We hope you find it to be a helpful "how-to" as you begin to map out all your "to-dos" in the upcoming year.

Finally, it just wouldn't be Great Advice if I didn't leave you with one of my own favorite gems from my pop culture collection of wisdom. This year it's from Ted Lasso, with Ted quoting Walt Whitman's words that can help bridge any divide:

"Be curious, not judgmental."

As you find your own way in the world, as you're introduced to new thoughts and cultures, you'll find it's hard to be judgmental if you're too busy being curious.

And that just sounds like a happier, better way to be, doesn't it?



Wishing you health and wellness,

Carissa Uhlman

Vice President of Student Success
Inceptia

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CONSIDERING COLLEGE?
GOOD INFO TO MAKE INFORMED CHOICES



COLLEGE, INTERRUPTED: THE CASE FOR GOING (BACK) TO SCHOOL

By Anna Helhoski

A cautionary note for the high school class of 2022: Waiting to enroll in college decreases the likelihood you'll ever attend or complete a degree.

It's a valid concern. Due to the pandemic, undergraduate enrollment was down 2.5% in fall 2020 and down 4.5% for spring 2021, compared with the previous fall and spring, respectively, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

There are also warning signs of an enrollment slump to come. The class of 2021 is lagging in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or [FAFSA](#). The application is the gatekeeper for college financial aid and, as of April 2, 2021, completion is down 7% compared with applications completed by the same time last year. FAFSA completions are an indicator of enrollment for the upcoming academic year, says Bill DeBaun, director of data and evaluation at the National College Attainment Network.

"When you're talking about the senior class that measures millions of students, you're talking about many students with their postsecondary trajectory potentially altered," DeBaun says.

Skiping out on college, delaying enrollment or not finishing a degree has consequences:

- You'll earn less if you don't go.
- If you don't go soon, you're less likely to go back.
- If you start a degree but don't finish, you're more likely to default on any student loans you took out.

A gap year made sense for many high school graduates in 2020 and is appealing for 2022 grads, too, experts say. The pandemic resulted in an uneven college experience that may have included hybrid and virtual learning, regular COVID-19 testing and quarantines. And not every student was well-positioned – or had the broadband access – to learn virtually.

"We'll probably be having this conversation 10 and 20 years from now, as to how this affected the next generation," says Nicole Smith, research professor and chief economist at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

If you sat out from college because of the pandemic or are planning to, experts argue that you should reconsider. Here are three key reasons why.

You'll earn more with a degree

So what if you delay or never go to college? Opportunity costs, mostly.

Getting a degree could mean earning nearly a million dollars more over your lifetime, according to data from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

Delaying enrollment for one year can cost a year's worth of wages over your lifetime, which you never recoup, according to a July 2020 report from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Earnings, no matter the education level, will vary by occupation, region, gender and race. But bachelor's degree holders still earn, on average, 31% more in their lifetimes than associate degree holders and 84% more than those with only a high school diploma.

That's not to say you can't consider education alternatives – short-term credential and trade programs, apprenticeships and associate degrees are all viable options. Statistically, though, a four-year degree or higher is a stronger insurance for greater earnings over your lifetime.

For low-income students and students of color who statistically have less generational wealth, degrees are also the best vehicle for upward mobility, says Michelle Dimino, education senior policy advisor at Third Way, a public policy think tank. A [recent Third Way study](#) found that most bachelor's degree programs net low-income students high enough wages to justify out-of-pocket costs.

**“What we're seeing is students who would most benefit from the socioeconomic benefits a college degree can provide are the least likely to be enrolling at this point in time,” Dimino says.
“The biggest concern that we have for those students delaying enrollment is it might lead to permanently forgoing college.”**

The longer the pause, the harder it is to finish a degree

According to federal data, there are millions of adult learners who don't start college until they're well into their 20s or older.

But you're less likely to complete a degree if you delay: Nearly half of those who delayed enrollment left college without earning a degree, compared with 27% of those who didn't delay, according to a 2005 report from the National Center for Education Statistics.

The further you get from high school, the less academic support and one-on-one encouragement you have to attend college, experts say. It's also more likely you'll get a job, start a family and have other income demands.

“There's something about that window of 18 to 24; if you start out at that point, you're likely to get to where you need to be,” Smith says.



You're more likely to default on student loans if you don't finish

Returning to college is especially important if you have student debt, [as most students do](#). Without a degree, federal data shows, you're statistically more likely to be late on payments and [default](#). This outcome can lead to a damaged credit score, collection costs and wage garnishment.

Federal data shows that among a cohort of students who started college in 2003-2004 and defaulted on student debt, nearly half didn't complete their education, while 10% finished a bachelor's degree.

The situation is the worst for Black student borrowers: The Brookings Institution found that Black first-time college students default at a rate three times higher than their White counterparts.

How to pay for college if your family's finances have changed

If you're reconsidering your decision to delay or forgo college, first figure out the best way to pay.

Start by submitting the FAFSA as soon as possible to qualify for federal, state and school financial aid, including Pell Grants, scholarships, work-study and federal student loans.

If your family's financial situation has changed due to the pandemic, [request a professional judgment](#) from your prospective or current school's financial aid office. You'll need to request a specific amount and submit documentation of why you need more aid, like confirmation of a parent's unemployment or medical bills.

If there's still a gap to fill, consider private loans.

Alternately, you could think about entering community college for a year or two, then transferring. Find out if the community college you're considering has credit transfer agreements (known as an articulation agreement) with any four-year colleges you're interested in attending.



[Anna Helhoski](#) is a staff writer at NerdWallet, a personal finance website.

The article [College, Interrupted: The Case for Going \(Back\) to School](#) originally appeared on NerdWallet on April 15, 2021.



SKIP COLLEGE? NOT IF YOU WANT TO MAKE MORE MONEY

By Anna Helhoski

Skeptical of the four-year college degree? It's still your best bet to make money.

Backlash against college as a common stop on the road to adulthood has mounted over the past decade. Critics say four-year degree programs saddle most students with five-digit debt without a clear path from classroom to career.

Nearly half (46%) of all families surveyed in November and December 2020 by Gallup for the Carnegie Corporation of New York said they would prefer their children attend alternatives to four-year institutions – even when there were no financial barriers.

But when you compare the value of a four-year degree with other credentials – a high school diploma, certificate programs and associate degrees – it still puts workers at an advantage in the labor market and leads to higher lifetime earnings, on average.

Bachelor's degrees are typically a good investment

If a college degree is an investment, it's a good one, according to the New York Federal Reserve. The annual return on a typical four-year degree is around 14%, it calculates, well above the threshold of "good" returns for stocks (around 7%) and bonds (3%).

In dollar terms, graduates with a [bachelor's degree will earn on average](#) about \$78,000 annually, compared with a high school diploma earner who receives around \$45,000 annually, according to 2019 data from the New York Federal Reserve.

However, "on average" doesn't mean that the return on your education, or college earnings premium, will always be a gain. Where you attend school, how much debt you take on, what you study and where you live after school all help determine your return. Many of those factors are influenced by your race, ethnicity and gender.



Your ability to repay debt affects your degree's value

Student loan debt is difficult to avoid and even more challenging to repay. College costs rose 117% from 1985-86 to 2018-19, according to federal data. Wages, meanwhile, didn't keep pace, growing only 19% during the same period, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

However, loans are still the primary vehicle for families without wealth to obtain college degrees. In order to make your degree worth it, you have to earn enough to justify it. That means carrying debt that won't put you underwater – a [manageable student loan payment](#) is around 10% of your discretionary after-tax income.

To get the best return and be able to repay debt, graduation is crucial – many borrowers who default will have debt but no degree.

“That’s the worst-case scenario – you’re incurring some of those costs but with very, very little benefit,” says Jonathan Rothwell, principal economist at Gallup.

Demand for your major matters

What you study in school will affect the type of job you can get, your earnings and your ability to repay debt.

Average earnings at mid-career are highest among those who hold a bachelor's degree in fields like science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM (\$76,000), business (\$67,000) and health (\$65,000), according to a 2015 [data report](#) from Georgetown University's Center for Education and the Workforce.

The same report found the lowest median mid-career earnings among those whose bachelor's degrees were in fields like arts, humanities and liberal arts (\$51,000), as well as teaching and serving roles such as social work (\$46,000).

To estimate earnings, graduation rates, typical student debt loads and other factors at individual schools, use the Education Department's [College Scorecard](#) tool. You can search and compare earnings as well as debt by fields of study.

Where you live after graduation also matters

Where you live after attaining your degree also affects its value, according to the results of a May 2020 study for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a conservative nonprofit think tank.



"In general, college degrees are a good investment, but the return in terms of cosmopolitan areas is phenomenal," says John Winters, associate professor of economics at Iowa State University, who conducted the study.

In cities, bachelor's degree holders earn \$95,229 on average, an 86.2% premium compared to a worker with a high school diploma and a 55.7% premium compared to an associate degree holder.

Winters says that's primarily because cities have a higher concentration of jobs in fields that often demand workers have four-year degrees, such as tech, finance and marketing. Workers in these fields earn higher wages, which leads to a greater return on investment for degrees.

However, Winters' findings also mean it's less critical to have a four-year degree if you want to live in a smaller metro or rural area. Bachelor's degree holders in nonurban areas have mean earnings of \$67,893, which puts their wages at a 46.4% premium compared to high school diploma holders and a 29.6% premium compared to associate degree holders.

Degree attainment doesn't guarantee equity

In some ways a college degree can exacerbate income and racial inequalities, such as student debt and ability to repay that debt, says Marshall Anthony Jr., a senior policy analyst at Center for American Progress, a public policy research organization.

"A college degree doesn't usually work the same for everybody," Anthony says.

Black borrowers tend to take on greater amounts of debt – about \$25,000 more, on average, than White borrowers, according to federal data.

In 2016, among those with a bachelor's or higher degree, Asian full-time, year-round workers ages 25-34 had higher median annual earnings (\$69,100) than their White peers (\$54,700), and median earnings for both racial/ethnic groups were higher than those of their Black (\$49,400) and Hispanic (\$49,300) peers, according to the most recent available data by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Higher debt and lower wages also mean Black borrowers will accrue more interest over time: Four years after graduating from college, Black graduates have \$52,726 in student loan debt compared to White graduates at \$28,006, according to a 2016 Brookings Institution study.

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[Anna Helhoski](#) is a staff writer at NerdWallet, a personal finance website.

The article [Skip College? Not If You Want to Make More Money](#) originally appeared on NerdWallet on July 19, 2021.



5 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PICKING A COLLEGE IN THE COVID-19 ERA

By Cecilia Clark

Colleges have faced innumerable challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. And the way they've responded to those issues should influence how prospective students evaluate them.

Online learning, strict campus rules and lingering economic concerns have left many students wondering if their college investment will be worthwhile. As a result, fall 2020 enrollment declined by 2.5% – or by more than 400,000 students – according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Hafeez Lakhani, founder of college admissions counseling firm Lakhani Coaching, acknowledges the changing college landscape but still advises students to prioritize college. "Education is about playing the long game," he says, pointing to data showing college graduates earn nearly twice as much over their lifetimes compared with high school graduates.

As you finalize your college selection, consider these questions to gauge which school is best for you in the era of COVID-19.

1 Can you visit campus?

Don't count out a school just because you can't physically visit campus.

"Sure, you don't get to step foot on campus, but you have more opportunities to connect with the school than you had before," says Sydney Matthes, counselor at college admissions consulting firm Collegewise. She says students can participate in virtual campus tours and virtual class audits.

For example, Hampton University's campus in Virginia remained closed through at least spring 2021 but is conducting tours and information sessions virtually. Admissions officials say the virtual tours allow prospective students to get a sense of the campus in anticipation of its reopening.

If a school isn't offering virtual tours, Matthes advises students to contact the admissions office directly and ask to meet via video chat with a professor or current student. "It's easier to sign up for a virtual tour, but shows interest to write an email," she says. "Creating relationships is important."

2 What are the COVID-19 rules?

Having a sense of how a college handled the pandemic's initial outbreak, the rules it set and its response to students [breaking campus COVID-19 rules](#) will give you an idea of what school life will look like.

Brett Joshpe, a lawyer who represented students dismissed from Northeastern University over COVID-19 rule violations, says he got calls from parents all over the country who were concerned about the pandemic rules and their enforcement.

“A lot of parents and [students] in general are rethinking what they’re paying for and where they are going [to college],” Joshpe says.

Make sure you can commit to rules set by a college before deciding to attend.

3 What is your — and the college’s — financial situation?

Many colleges and students are seeing their finances change as the pandemic drags on.

For colleges, Lakhani attributes some of the financial decline to decreased international student enrollment. He says there have been fewer international students coming to the United States over the last several years, and the pandemic only exacerbated the situation.

“International students typically pay full tuition,” Lakhani says. “When you take the flow of international students out, universities have to make up that tuition elsewhere.”

He fears that the cost difference could be passed down to other students, that programs or amenities could be affected and that smaller private schools may have to close.

For students, the pandemic-induced economic downturn means you may have less money available to cover college expenses. According to a June 2020 survey by college study guide website OneClass, about 50% of the 9,000 students surveyed say the coronavirus pandemic has decreased their ability to pay tuition.

But even with a shifting financial landscape, you can still attend college:

- Select a [college you can afford](#) that has a strong financial standing.
- Take advantage of scholarships, grants and other free money through the [FAFSA](#) before borrowing.
- If your financial situation has changed from what’s represented on your FAFSA, contact prospective schools and request a [professional judgment](#) to amend your aid offer.



4 What are the online options?

There is no guarantee what colleges will look like by fall 2022. And if they start off in person, they could have to quickly pivot back online.

So even though you may be considering a school based on its in-person classes, campus and activities, also evaluate its online structure. To do this, ask to test drive the school's online learning platform and attend a virtual lecture. You can also get the perspective of a student who started off in person, but had to switch to online.

And ask if your school keeps records of how many professors are trained or certified in online learning. The ability to teach great classes in person doesn't always mean the ability to teach great classes online.

5 What support services does the college offer?

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in mental health issues for college-aged students.

According to a June 2020 survey by the research institute Center for Promise, one-third of the 3,300 teenagers surveyed say they have been feeling more depressed or unhappy during the pandemic.

A September 2020 study by the Journal of Medical Internet Research shows 71% of 195 college students surveyed expressed feelings of depression and anxiety. The study concluded there is an "urgent need to develop interventions and preventive strategies to address the mental health of college students."

Some colleges are responding to this need. Appalachian State University in North Carolina, for example, began offering virtual one-on-one and group counseling for remote and on-campus students. It also hosts a student-led mental health ambassador group that offers peer mentorship.

If you have been struggling emotionally during the pandemic, prioritize a college that has strong support services. Matthes says she advised students to consider support services before the pandemic and that they are even more important now. "The uncertainty can be a little scary, but this, hopefully, isn't forever," she says.



[Cecilia Clark](#) is a writer at NerdWallet.

The article [5 Things to Consider When Picking a College in the COVID-19 Era](#) originally appeared on NerdWallet on February 26, 2021.



FAFSA & COLLEGE PREP



THE FAFSA OPENS IN OCTOBER: WHY YOU SHOULD APPLY ASAP

By Cecilia Clark

An influx of college financial aid applications this year means that money could run out for students who don't file early.

Due to financial strain caused by COVID-19, nearly 40% of families that didn't previously plan to apply for federal financial aid now expect to do so, according to a recently released survey from Discover Student Loans.

The federal government, states, colleges and other organizations use the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#), or FAFSA, to award financial aid. You must complete the FAFSA to be considered for financial aid.

You have 21 months to submit the FAFSA for any given academic year. For the 2022-23 school year, the FAFSA opens October 1, 2021, and closes June 30, 2023. But that doesn't mean you should wait.

"There is no downside to applying early, but a lot of risk in applying late," says Manny Chagas, vice president and head of marketing and product at Discover Student Loans.

Here's why you should file the FAFSA now.

Better shot at more free money

The sooner you submit the FAFSA, the greater your chances are of getting free aid you don't have to repay, such as grants or scholarships.

Federal Pell Grant money likely won't run out, but other need-based aid, including that awarded through your school and state, is limited and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Jack Murphy, financial aid counselor at the University of Northern Iowa, named the [Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant](#) and his school's tuition assistance grant as examples.

The Federal Work-Study Program also has limited funds, so you'll want to file the FAFSA early to take advantage of it.

More time to appeal a financial aid decision

Students and parents who are dissatisfied with their aid amounts or have a change in economic circumstances can [appeal the financial aid award](#) from their school. To do this, you need to petition your school with a [financial aid appeal letter](#) and provide evidence to support your need for more aid. If you wait too long, the aid money could run out.



Those who file the FAFSA early are more likely to receive their school-based financial aid awards with their college acceptance letters. While your federal aid will be the same no matter where you attend college, you can send your FAFSA information to several schools to see which will give you the best school-based aid package. Doing so early will allow you to compare offers and appeal if necessary.

If you apply for the FAFSA late, you not only risk a smaller award to begin with, but you also have less opportunity to “shop around” and submit a successful appeal letter.

A quarter of parents surveyed by Discover Student Loans say they’ll appeal their financial aid decision because of previous award amounts and pandemic-induced changes in family finances. In speaking about the survey, Chagas emphasizes that there tends to be more money available early in the process, so students should make the FAFSA a priority.

Murphy agrees. “Filing early makes sure you’re in the running to receive as many awards as possible,” he says. “We see students that get [aid] one year, but not the next.”

They don’t lose out on aid because they no longer qualify, Murphy explains. They just waited too long.



[Cecilia Clark](#) a writer at NerdWallet.

The article [The FAFSA Just Opened: Why You Should Apply Now](#) originally appeared on NerdWallet on October 1, 2020.



8 STEPS TO COMPLETING THE FAFSA FORM

U.S. Department of Education [Resource Article](#)

Completing the FAFSA® form is the first step to obtaining federal student aid to pay for your higher education. Follow these eight simple steps to set you up for success and submit it on time. If you are a parent, you might find [8 Easy Steps for Parents Completing the FAFSA form](#) helpful. We also have a resource if you are a parent with [more than one child going to college](#). Ready to fill out the FAFSA form?

1 Create a StudentAid.gov account (FSA ID)

Student: An FSA ID is a username and password you need to sign the FAFSA form online. If you don't have an FSA ID, [get an FSA ID here](#) ASAP. It takes about 10 minutes to create an FSA ID. If this will be your first time filling out the FAFSA form, you'll be able to use your FSA ID right away to sign and submit your FAFSA form online. If this is not your first time filling out the FAFSA form, you may need to wait one to three days for us to verify your info before you can use your FSA ID to renew your FAFSA form and sign it online.

Parent: If [your child is required to report parent information on the FAFSA form](#), you need to create your own FSA ID in order to sign your child's FAFSA form online. [Create an FSA ID here](#). Parents are able to use their FSA IDs right away.

Some of the most common FAFSA errors occur when the student and parent mix up their FSA IDs. If you don't want your financial aid to be delayed, it's extremely important that each parent and each student create his or her own FSA ID and that they do not share it with ANYONE, not even with each other.

2 Start the FAFSA form at StudentAid.gov

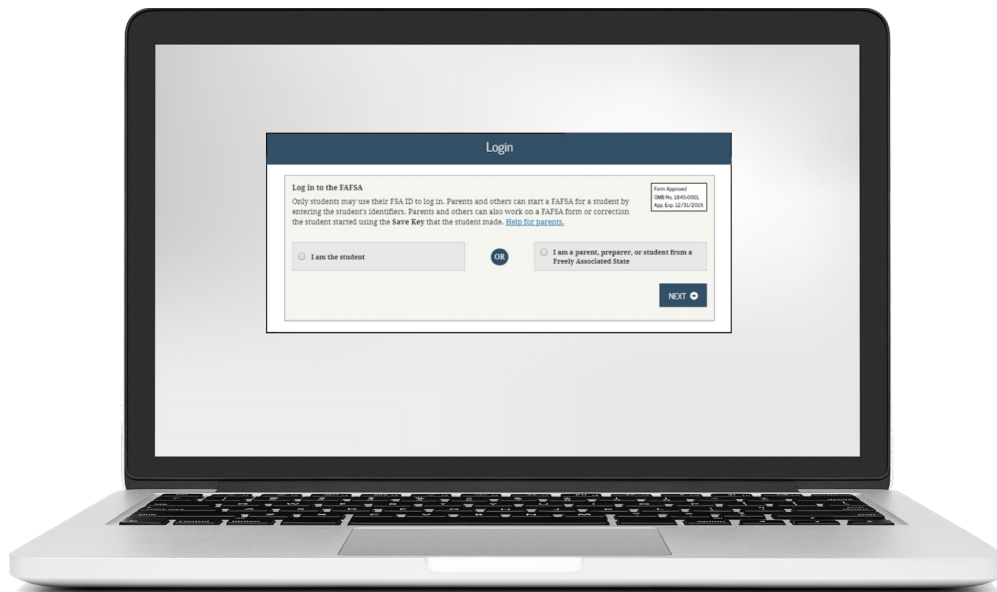
The 2022–23 FAFSA form launches October 1! Even if your state and school deadlines aren't for a while, you should complete the FAFSA form as soon as possible because some states and schools run out of financial aid early and have limited funds. Don't wait until the last minute to apply!



Start the FAFSA

TIP: If you are the parent/guardian, read [8 Easy Steps for Parents Completing the FAFSA form](#).

- If you are the student: Click “I am the student.” Enter your FSA ID username and password, and then click “Next.”
- If you are the parent: Click “I am a parent, preparer, or student from a Freely Associated State.” Provide the student’s name, Social Security number, and date of birth, and click “Next.”



Choose whether you are the student or the parent on the first page of the FAFSA form.

Choose which FAFSA form you’d like to complete:

- **2021–22 FAFSA form** if you will be attending college between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022.
- **2022–23 FAFSA form** if you will be attending college between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023.
- **Both:** If you will be attending college during both time periods and haven’t completed your 2021–22 FAFSA form yet, complete that first, wait one to three days until it processes, then go back in and complete the 2022–23 FAFSA form.

TIP: If you are given the option to complete a “renewal” FAFSA form, choose that option. When you choose to **renew** your FAFSA form, your demographic information from the previous year will roll over into your new application, saving you some time.



Create a save key

- Unlike the FSA ID, the save key is meant to be shared. A save key is a temporary password that allows you and your parent(s) to “pass” the FAFSA form back and forth. It also allows you to save the FAFSA form and return to it later. This is especially helpful if you and your parent are not in the same place.
- Watch the “[FAFSA and FSA ID Tips for Parents](#)” video

Remember, the FAFSA form is not a onetime thing. You must complete a FAFSA form for each school year.

3 Fill out the Student Demographics section

This is information such as your name, date of birth, etc. If you have completed the FAFSA form in the past or if you log into the FAFSA form with your FSA ID, a lot of your personal information will be prepopulated to save you time. Make sure you enter your personal information exactly as it appears on your Social Security card. (That’s right, no nicknames.)

Parents/Guardians: Remember that the FAFSA form is the student’s application, not yours. When the FAFSA form says “you” or “your,” it’s referring to the student (unless otherwise noted). Pay attention to whether you’re being asked for student or parent information.

4 List the schools to which you want your FAFSA information sent

In the School Selection section, add every school you’re considering, even if you haven’t applied or been accepted yet. It doesn’t hurt your application to add more schools; colleges can’t see the other schools you’ve added. In fact, you don’t even have to remove schools if you later decide not to apply or attend. If you don’t end up applying or getting accepted to a school, the school can just disregard your FAFSA form. But, you can remove schools at any time to make room for new schools. You can add up to 10 schools at a time. [If you’re applying to more than 10 schools, here’s what you should do.](#)

5 Answer the dependency status questions

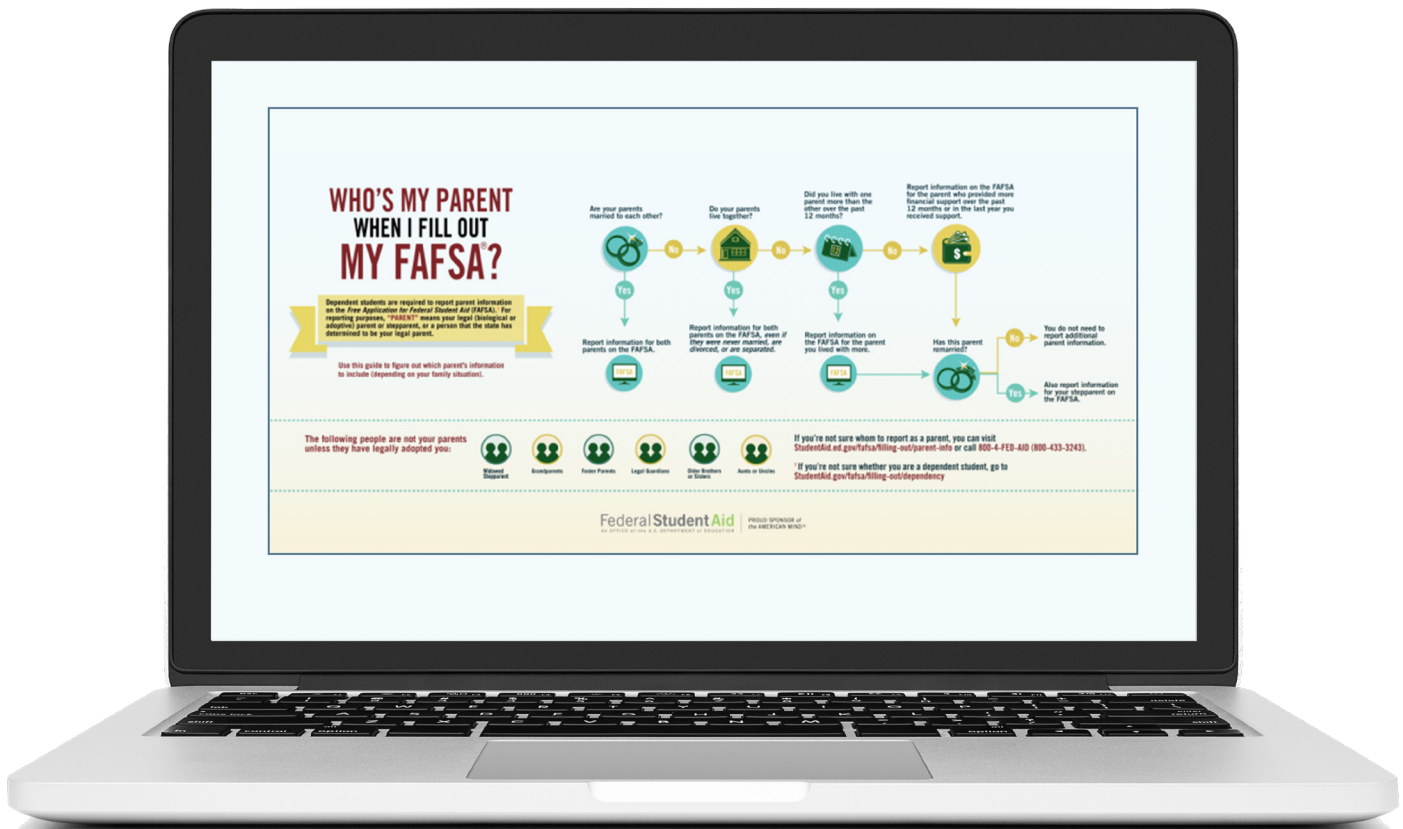
In the dependency status section, you’ll be asked a [series of specific questions](#) to determine whether you are required to provide parent information on the FAFSA form. The dependency guidelines are set by Congress and are different from those used by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Even if you live on your own, support yourself, and file taxes on your own, you may still be considered a dependent student for federal student aid purposes. If you are determined to be a dependent student, you’ll be required to report information about your parent(s). If you’re determined to be an independent student, you won’t have to provide parent information and you can skip the next step.



6 Fill out the Parent Demographics section

This is where your parent(s) will provide basic demographic information. Remember that it doesn't matter if you don't live with your parent(s); you still must report information about them if you were determined to be a dependent student in the step above.

Start by figuring out who counts as your parent on the FAFSA form.

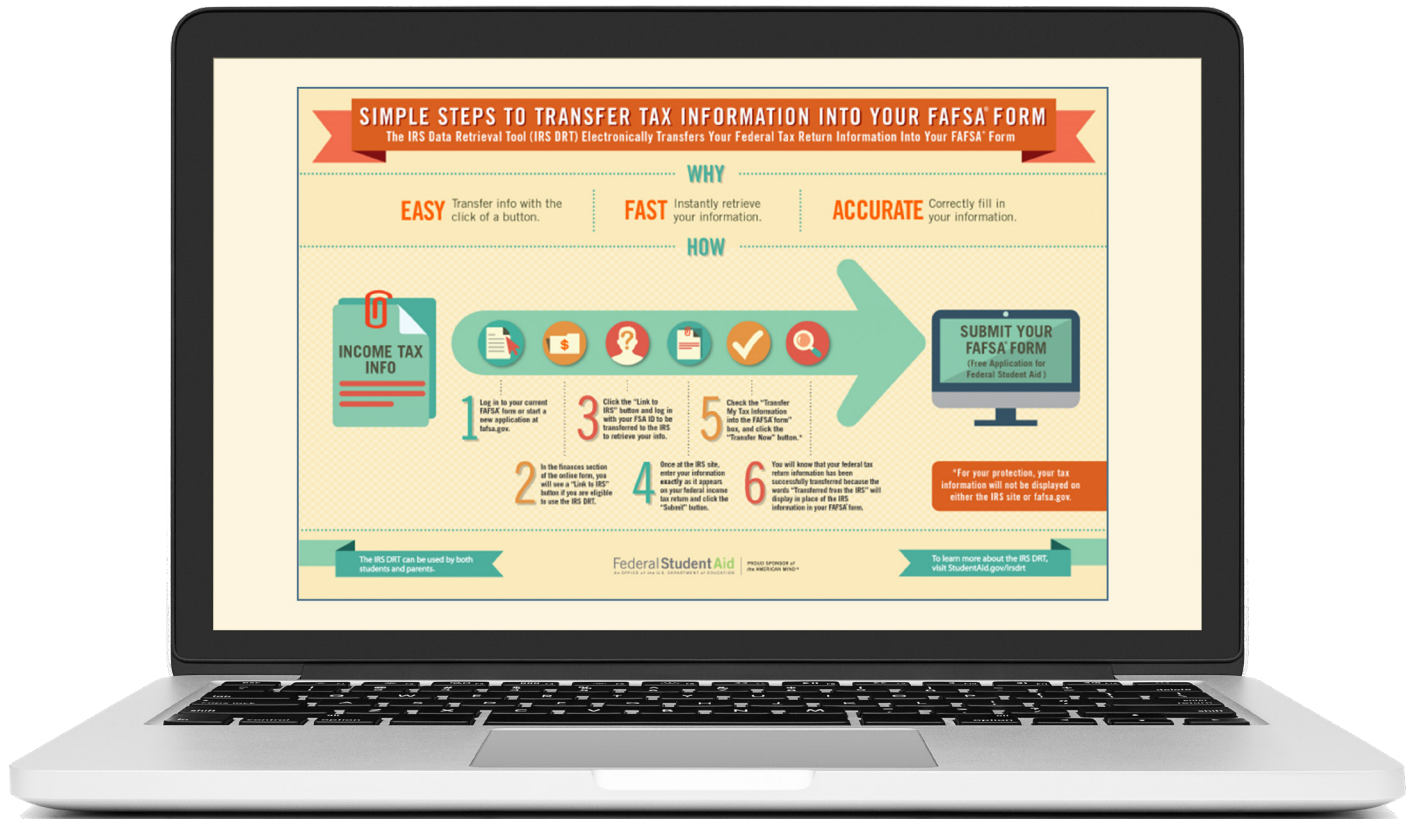


Determine who takes the parent role in the FAFSA form using this graphic.

- [Read specific guidance about reporting your parents' information as a dependent student.](#)
- [What to do if you are not able to provide parent info due to special circumstances.](#)

7 Supply your financial information

Here is where you and your parent(s) (if applicable) will provide your financial information. This step is incredibly simple if you use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT). The IRS DRT allows you to import your IRS tax information into the FAFSA form with just a few clicks. Using this tool also may reduce the amount of paperwork you need to provide to your school. So if you're eligible, use it!



You can easily transfer your tax information into your FAFSA form using the IRS DRT.

To access the tool, indicate that you've "already completed" taxes on the student or parent finances page. If you're eligible, you'll see a "LINK TO IRS" button. Choose that option and follow the prompts.

Link to the IRS DRT to easily incorporate your income tax information into the FAFSA form.

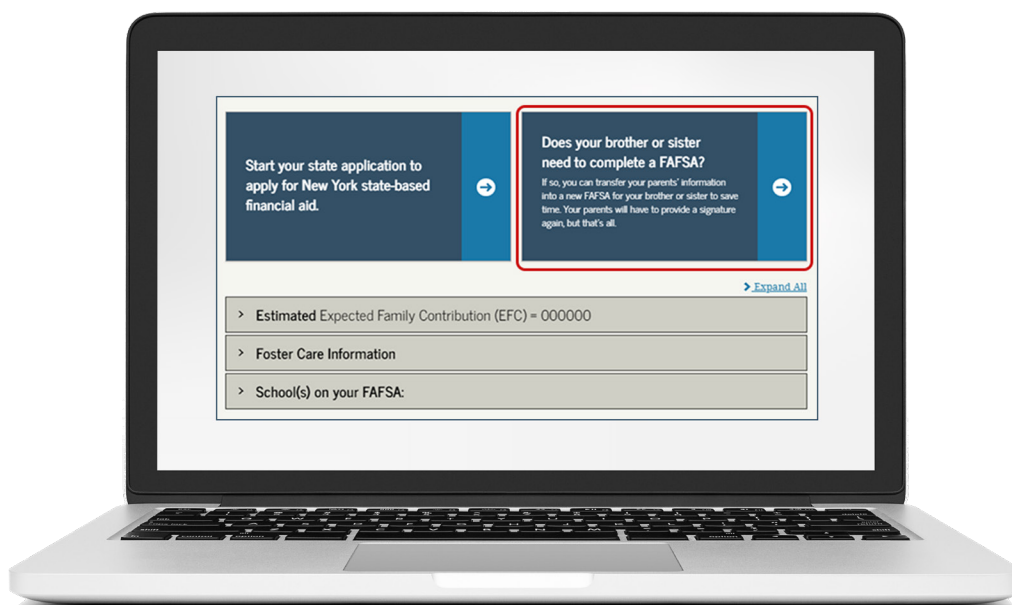
8 Sign and submit your FAFSA form

You're not finished with the FAFSA form until you (and your parent, if you're a dependent student) sign it. The quickest and easiest way to sign your FAFSA form is online with your FSA ID.

Note: If you (the student) logged in to the FAFSA form with your FSA ID at the beginning, you won't need to provide it again on this page. But, if you're a dependent student, your parent will still need to sign before you can completely submit.

Sign and Submit Tips:

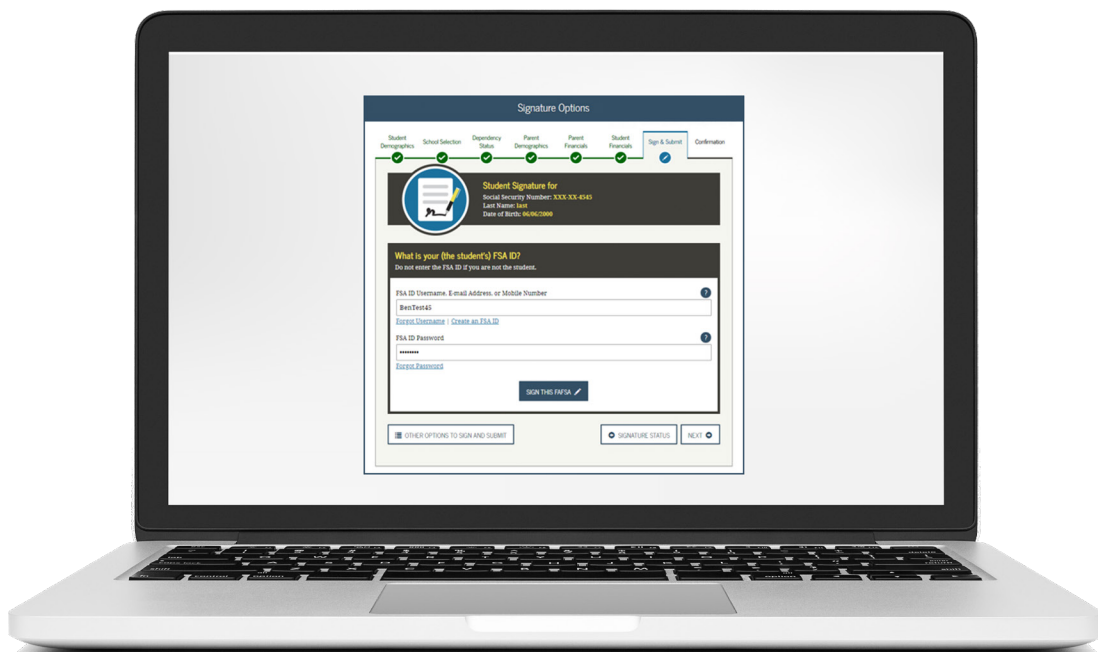
- If you or your parent forgot your FSA ID username or password, you can [retrieve it](#).
- Make sure you and your parent don't mix up your FSA IDs. This is one of the most common errors we see, and why it's extremely important for each person to create his or her own FSA ID and not share it with anyone.
- Make sure the parent who is using his or her FSA ID to sign the FAFSA form chooses the right parent number from the drop-down menu. If your parent doesn't remember whether he or she was listed as Parent 1 or Parent 2, he or she can go back to the parent demographics section to check.
- [Here's what you should do if you get an error saying that your FSA ID information doesn't match the information provided on the FAFSA form.](#)
- If you have siblings, your parent can use the same FSA ID to sign FAFSA forms for all of their dependents. Your parent can also transfer his or her information into your sibling's application by choosing the option provided on the FAFSA confirmation page.



The FAFSA form allows you to continue with state applications or for your parents to complete it for multiple dependents.



- We recommend signing the FAFSA form with an FSA ID because it's the fastest way to get your FAFSA form processed. However, if you and/or your parent are unable to sign the FAFSA form electronically with an FSA ID, you can mail in a signature page. From the sign and submit page, select "Other options to sign and submit" and then choose "Print A Signature Page." Just keep in mind that your FAFSA form will take longer to process if you go this route.



Don't forget to sign and submit the FAFSA form.

I'm finished. What's next?

Congrats on finishing! You're one step closer to getting money for college. With the hard part over, [check out this page to learn what you should do next](#).



SENIOR YEAR COLLEGE PREP CHECKLIST

Inceptia

Available at <https://inceptia.fyi/GA4PSrChecklist>

Wondering how to stay on track this year while preparing for college? This seasonal checklist will help you keep tabs every step of the way.

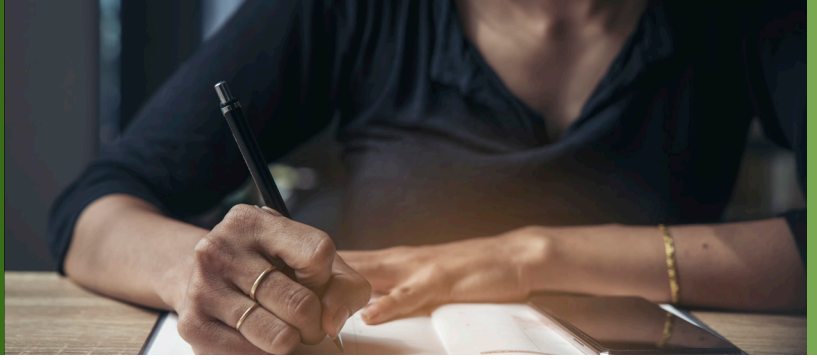
STUDENTS

ALL YEAR

- ☐ Work hard all the way to graduation – second-semester grades can affect [scholarship eligibility](#).
- ☐ Stay involved in after-school activities, and seek leadership roles if possible.

FALL

- ☐ As soon as possible after its October 1 release, complete and submit your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), at studentaid.gov, along with any other financial aid applications your chosen school(s) may require. You should submit your FAFSA by the earliest financial aid deadline of the schools to which you are applying, usually by early February.
- ☐ After you submit the FAFSA, you should receive your [Student Aid Report \(SAR\)](#) within three days to three weeks. This document lists your answers to the questions on your FAFSA and gives you some basic information about your aid eligibility. Quickly [make any necessary corrections](#) and submit them to the FAFSA processor.
- ☐ If you haven't done so already, register for and take the standardized tests required for college admission. Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.
- ☐ Apply to the colleges you have chosen. Prepare your applications carefully. Follow the instructions, and PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DEADLINES!
- ☐ Well before your college application deadlines, ask your counselor and teachers to submit the required documents (e.g., transcript, letters of recommendation) to the colleges to which you're applying.
- ☐ Complete any last scholarship applications.



WINTER/SPRING

- ☐ Visit colleges that have invited you to enroll.
- ☐ Review your college acceptances and [compare the colleges' financial aid offers](#).
- ☐ Contact a school's financial aid office if you have questions about the aid that school has offered you. In fact, getting to know your financial aid staff early is a good idea no matter what – they can tell you about deadlines, other aid for which you might wish to apply, and important paperwork you might need to submit.
- ☐ When you decide which school you want to attend, notify that school of your commitment and submit any required financial deposit. Many schools require this notification and deposit by May 1.

TO EXPLORE:

- ☐ Understand the FAFSA better by watching the FAFSA videos at www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid.
- ☐ Follow or like the office of Federal Student Aid at <https://twitter.com/FAFSA> and <https://www.facebook.com/FederalStudentAid> to get regular financial aid tips.
- ☐ Make informed decisions about student loans; the following resources are important at this point:
 - ☐ [Federal Versus Private Loans](#)
 - ☐ [Federal Student Loans: Basics for Students](#)

REMEMBER: Register for all tests in advance and be sure to give yourself time to prepare appropriately! If you have difficulty paying a registration fee, ask your school counselor about getting the fee waived.



PARENTS/GUARDIANS

TO DO:

- ☐ Work with your child on [filling out the FAFSA](#).
- ☐ Make sure your child's [personal information is safe](#) when he or she applies for financial aid. For tips, read [Federal Student Aid and Identity Theft](#).
- ☐ Read [IRS Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education](#) to see how you might benefit from federal income tax credits for education expenses.
- ☐ Understand the [benefits of federal student loans](#).
- ☐ Help your child learn about the responsibilities involved in accepting a student loan by reviewing "[What should I consider when taking out federal student loans?](#)" with him or her.
- ☐ Look at communications from schools to which your child sent FAFSA information. If a school has offered you or your child Direct PLUS Loans, the [Federal Student Loans: Basics for Students](#) and [Federal Student Loans: Direct PLUS Loan Basics for Parents](#) booklets might be useful to you.

For more FAFSA help from Inceptia, check out these additional resources we've created to help you before, during and after FAFSA completion:

- ☐ [FAFSA Process](#)
- ☐ [FAFSA Deadlines](#)
- ☐ [FAFSA Checklist](#)
- ☐ [FAFSA Common Mistakes](#)
- ☐ [Updating Your FAFSA](#)
- ☐ [FAFSA Resources](#)



PRO TIPS FOR FINANCIAL AID



HOW TO GET A PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT FOR FINANCIAL AID

By Anna Helhoski

You might need to request a professional judgment from your school if your current finances are not accurately reflected on your financial aid application.

When you submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or [FAFSA](#), your prior-prior year tax information is pulled into the application. For example for the 2021-22 school year application, 2018 tax information is pulled. It's used to determine how much financial aid you will receive.

But if your family's finances are different now than they were two years ago, then you could be entitled to more need-based financial aid, such as a [Pell Grant](#). To do so, you'll need to contact your college (or prospective school) and ask for a professional judgment.

What is a professional judgment?

A professional judgment considers your unique circumstances in a way the FAFSA does not. It's the path to getting a more accurate assessment of the amount of money your family can contribute toward your education (also known as [Expected Family Contribution](#)) so that financial aid administrators can adjust the data on your FAFSA that affects that total.

All professional judgments are made on an individual basis and only for special circumstances.

You'll have to contact your college (or prospective school) to get the process started. There's no fee, but you'll have to provide documentation to back up your claim of a special circumstance, such as unemployment information or medical bills.

If you apply to multiple colleges, you'll need to contact each financial aid office and move through the process at every school.

Once the financial aid administrator at each school makes a decision, it is final. There is no possible appeal.



What to do if you need more financial aid

If the professional judgment is unsuccessful, or if you need more money to fill a payment gap, you have a few options, in this order:

- Scholarships: [Look for scholarships](#) from your state or private organizations. You can use [this tool](#) from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators or the [Department of Labor's scholarship search tool](#).
- Federal student loans: You've already submitted the FAFSA, which is the key to borrowing federal loans. Accept all direct subsidized loans (they don't grow interest while you're not making payments) before taking direct unsubsidized loans. There are [limits to federal student loans](#) so you might need additional funds.
- Private student loans: Your last resort is private student loans from banks or online lenders. If you don't have any credit history or income, you'll need a co-signer who does. [Compare rates](#) from multiple lenders to find the least expensive option.

If you do have to borrow to help pay for school, a good guideline is to take on a loan that has a payment of no more than 10% of your forecast monthly take-home pay after you graduate. Use a [college debt affordability calculator](#) to estimate payments.



[Anna Helhoski](#) is a staff writer at NerdWallet, a personal finance website.

The article [How to Get a Professional Judgment for Financial Aid](#) originally appeared on NerdWallet on October 8, 2020.



HOW TO SEARCH FOR SCHOLARSHIPS, NOT GET LOST IN SPAM

By Ryan Lane

Scholarship search websites promise students access to millions of awards totaling billions in free money for college.

All you need is an email address to use sites like Fastweb, Cappex and Unigo. But once you provide it, scholarship listings aren't the only things you'll receive.

"[You] are going to get a lot of spam," says Monica Matthews, creator of the website how2winscholarships.com. "You are going to be inundated."

Don't let a barrage of emails deter you from signing up – or sticking with – a scholarship website, though.

You don't have to repay scholarships, making them the [best way to pay for college](#). You can win private awards before you even know where you'll go to college. And giving a scholarship site some basic data can simplify your search by identifying potential matches.

Here's how to use these tools to get more than just marketing emails.

Decide whether to opt out

Scholarship sites let you opt out of email communications. But you may not want to unsubscribe from everything.

Fastweb, which has helped students find scholarships since 1995, lets you pick specific communications when you register. That way, you'll receive messages about award deadlines but not part-time jobs, for example.

"Our aim is to keep students informed," says Kathryn Knight Randolph, Fastweb's associate content editor.



Other scholarship sites may feature more general communication preference choices. Even then, deleting messages as they arrive can make more sense than opting out altogether.

“Let it come in and at least take a quick glance,” says Marianne Ragins, publisher of [ScholarshipWorkshop.com](https://www.scholarshipworkshop.com). “Sometimes, it might be something good.”

But even if you opt out of emails, personal information like your address or phone number can still be sold to third parties. Look for an opt-in addressing this when you register and check the website’s privacy policy to understand how it handles your personal information and your rights.

Create a dedicated email

Providing an email is the price of doing business with many scholarship search engines.

“Our service is free,” Randolph says. “With that comes working with advertisers and people who want to market to students.”

That doesn’t mean you have to give them your primary email address.

Instead, create an email account solely for scholarship mail. It will keep marketers from your main inbox and help you track your applications.

Matthews recommends using “something clean” for your scholarship email, like your first and last name with an additional number, symbol or dash if needed.

Be sure to check this account’s spam folder. Important messages like acceptance notices from scholarship providers could end up there by accident.

Use a site that doesn’t require registration

The scholarship sites that don’t require an email are unlikely to save your results or send you reminders, but you’ll avoid marketing messages.

To see if you prefer to not share your email, try sites such as [CareerOneStop](https://www.careeronestop.com) from the U.S. Department of Labor and the [College Board’s Scholarship Search](https://collegeboard.org/scholarship-search). Ideally, you’ll use both kinds of sites, registered and not, and multiple scholarship search engines.

“Five is a good place to start,” says Kristina Ellis, creator of CollegeNinja.com. “You don’t want to get too overwhelmed.”

Avoid websites that charge a fee, since there are plenty of free choices.



Evaluate awards wisely

Some scholarships may be more likely to lead to spam – or be outright scams.

Never pay for awards. And be wary of applications that require information like a Social Security number, says Shauna Grant, financial aid director at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

“If it feels invasive, put the brakes on,” Grant says.

Ragins says to know what you’re getting into if you enter sweepstakes, for example. These scholarships may not be scams – you can win money – but their primary goal is collecting information to sell.

“If you’re not prepared to have your name put in a marketing bucket, then don’t do it,” she says.

Don’t rely on websites alone

Scholarship search sites are a great way to find awards, but [they shouldn’t be your only strategy](#). Consider the following tactics as well:

- Look locally. Visit your high school guidance counselor or college financial aid office to find awards from local organizations or businesses, as well as your state.
- Google it. Use searches that include your interests, potential majors, year in school and other details.
- Read scholarship books. Check your library for recent editions of titles like “The Ultimate Scholarship Book” and “Scholarships, Grants & Prizes.”



[Ryan Lane](#) is a writer at NerdWallet.

The article [How to Search for Scholarships, Not Get Lost in Spam](#) originally appeared on NerdWallet on October 21, 2020.



COLLEGE-BOUND GRADS COULD EXIT WITH \$38K STUDENT LOAN DEBT

By Erin El Issa

A 2021 high school graduate who will depend on student loans to pay for college could expect to borrow \$38,147 for their bachelor's degree, according to a new NerdWallet analysis.

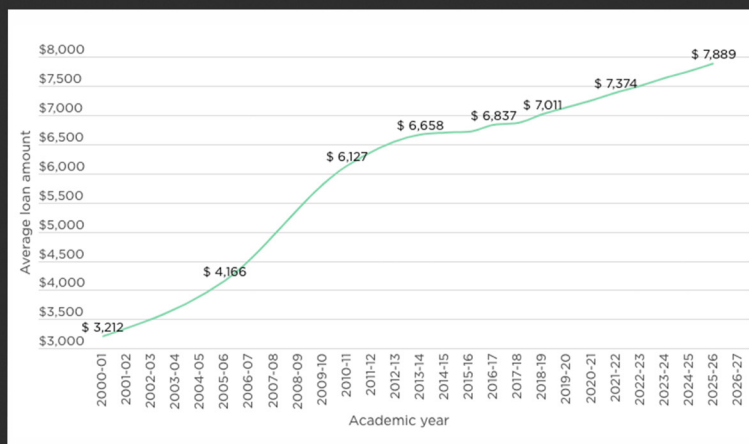
Around 45% of 2021 high school grads may enroll in four-year colleges, based on prior years' enrollment data. NerdWallet's analysis of the most recent data available from the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES, shows that:

- 45% of these enrollees would take on student loan debt.
- It will take them about five years, on average, to get a bachelor's degree.
- Assuming they relied on loans to pay for each of the five years, borrowers could face a post-graduation debt load of more than \$38,000.

For this analysis, we limited our scope to four-year public colleges and universities. Private institutions tend to be costlier and may have a higher number of borrowers than public institutions.

Projected annual student borrowing

Average annual loan growth per student slowed around 2010, and we used that slower annual growth to calculate potential student loan debt loads for 2021 high school graduates. Assuming five years in pursuit of a bachelor's degree, we estimate that a student relying on student loans will graduate with \$38,147 in debt.



Source: NerdWallet analysis of data from the NCES, including average student loan amounts in constant dollars for four-year public institutions. Data from 2000-01 through 2018-19 were provided; data for 2020-2026 is NerdWallet projections. For 2000 through 2014, the NCES only provided data for academic years 2000-01, 2005-06, 2010-11 and 2013-14.



This analysis does have some limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic: The most recent available data from the NCES is from the 2018-19 academic year. We used this data and the data from prior years to make projections about the percentage of high school graduates who will enroll in a four-year college, the percentage of them who will be awarded student loans and the amount of student loans they'll ultimately take on. We'll only know for sure in retrospect if our projections are overestimations, but all calculations have been made based on past high school graduation enrollment rates and student loan loads.

"Even after a rough year for students due to the pandemic and the possibility of taking on \$38,000 in loans over the next five years, college is still a worthwhile investment," says Anna Helhoski, NerdWallet's authority on student loans. "Completing at least a bachelor's degree typically leads to better job opportunities and more income over your lifetime."

If you're a 2022 high school graduate (or the parent of one), here are some ways to minimize student loan debt before, during and after college.

1 **Submit the FAFSA annually**

The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#), or FAFSA, is a form that should be submitted each year you plan to attend college. In addition to qualifying you for federal student loans, it will also be used to assess eligibility for federal, state and school grants, scholarships and work-study programs, all of which could reduce your post-graduation debt balance.

For the 2022-23 academic year, the [FAFSA opens on October 1, 2021](#), and you can still fill it out until June 30, 2023.

If you plan to enroll in the upcoming academic year and haven't yet applied for aid, do so as soon as possible. Filing the FAFSA close to the open date can improve your chances of qualifying for grant, scholarship and work-study aid before it runs out.

Also, find the FAFSA deadlines for your state and college. These dates are typically earlier than the federal deadline and filing on time can qualify you for state and institutional grants and scholarships.

If your family's financial situation changes – maybe a parent loses a job or becomes disabled – you can [appeal a financial aid decision](#) that was made using data that no longer reflects your household finances. In this case, email your school's financial aid office to ask about its appeals guidelines or request a professional judgment. You'll need to provide documentation about your situation and can request a specific sum to make up the deficit. Appeals aren't always successful, but there's no harm in asking for what you need.

2 Apply for scholarships beyond the first year

Scholarships aren't available for students in their first year only; returning students can also apply for this aid. In addition to filling out the FAFSA each year, you may find scholarships through your school's financial aid office, community organizations or local businesses, as well as scholarship databases like the Department of Labor's [Scholarship Finder](#) tool. Check out NerdWallet's guide on [how to get a scholarship](#) if you aren't sure where to start.

"Ideally, you'll get a scholarship that's renewable each year, but in lieu of those needle-in-a-haystack scholarships, there are always new opportunities to find free money for college," Helhoski says.

3 Work part-time to help cover school expenses

For most full-time students, it's unlikely that they'll be able to cover tuition and living expenses by working a part-time job, according to a [NerdWallet analysis](#) on college costs and wage growth. But those who can balance a full class schedule with part-time work may be able to reduce their student loan needs.

Submitting the FAFSA can help you qualify for [work-study](#) aid, which is a federal- or state-funded program that helps students with financial need obtain part-time work. Of course, if you don't receive work-study aid, you can look for a part-time job on your own that's flexible enough to accommodate your class schedule and study time.

4 Borrow only what's necessary

If you're offered more federal student loans than you need to pay college costs, you may be tempted to accept this extra aid. (While you can't be awarded aid that exceeds your school's cost of attendance, those with a part-time job or financial help from family might not actually need the full amount offered.) After all, college students are notoriously strapped for cash. But it's best to accept only the loans you need to minimize the amount you'll have to pay back later.

Not quite sure how much you'll need? Your college should have a [net price calculator](#) on its website to estimate attendance costs. If you need to take out additional student loans to cover living expenses, try to minimize this amount by setting a budget.

"It can be easy to overestimate what you'll reasonably be able to repay each month after college," Helhoski says. "Do your future self a favor and be realistic about what will be affordable for you post-grad."

To determine what a manageable college debt load looks like, aim for student loan payments that don't exceed 10% of your projected after-tax monthly income your first year out of school. For example, someone earning \$50,000 a year, shouldn't pay more than \$279 a month toward student debt. You can estimate future salaries using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#).

5 Aim to graduate faster

According to the National Student Clearinghouse, it takes an average of five years to obtain a bachelor's degree. But if you can finish in the traditional four years, you can enter the workforce sooner and possibly cut down on the amount you'll owe in loans.

Fifteen credit hours is the typical course load for a semester. Colleges generally charge by the credit hour, but also could have a range of credit hours that cost the same amount. For example, a university might charge the same flat rate for taking 12-18 credit hours. By taking a fuller course load, you can reduce the amount of tuition you'll have to pay and the loans needed to pay for it.

This might not be possible, particularly if you're also working or participating in time-intensive extracurricular activities. But if you can swing it, you may be able to get a diploma ahead of schedule.

6 Explore repayment options while in school

You just graduated from high school, so it may seem absurd to consider the bills you'll need to pay after graduating from college, but it's a good idea to know the options.

Federal loans won't cover the full amount of projected student loans (\$38,147 for a bachelor's degree) the average incoming student will require, according to our analysis. Instead, federal loans are capped at \$31,000 for undergraduate students. If you need more than that, you'll need parent loans or private loans.

Let's assume you take out the full \$31,000 in federal student loans and it's unsubsidized (which means you'll eventually have to pay the interest you accrue while in school). If you don't opt for another repayment plan, you'll automatically be funneled into the standard 10-year plan. But depending on your post-grad finances, you may want to look into an income-based program or an extended repayment plan.

Here are three repayment scenarios for \$31,000 in unsubsidized federal student loans after graduation in 2026.

	Monthly payment	Repayment term	Total amount repaid
Traditional 10-year	\$325	10 years	\$38,972
Income-driven (REPAYE)	\$355	9 years	\$38,480
Extended	\$157	25 years	\$47,107

Based on maximum allowable annual and aggregate Direct loans for undergraduates. Assumes all loans are unsubsidized, interest rates average 2.75% (a conservative estimate based on 2021-22 federal student loan rates) and a static annual income of \$61,902.



In the scenario above, the [Revised Pay As You Earn](#), or REPAYE, plan has the highest payments, the shortest timeframe and the smallest total amount repaid. It's the one income-driven plan that most Direct loan borrowers are eligible for. REPAYE caps monthly payments at 10% of your discretionary income and forgives your remaining balance after 20 years of payments, so this can be helpful for graduates with lower incomes.

The extended repayment plan is the smallest monthly payment with the longest time frame to pay off your loans, but the downside is you'll pay almost an additional \$10,000 over the repayment period.

"When you have a higher-than-average income, an income-driven repayment plan could be the fastest way to get rid of your debt – even quicker than on a standard plan," Helhoski says. "That also means your monthly payments could be higher than on a standard plan since the amount you pay corresponds with your income. However, a plan like REPAYE will still provide a critical safety net if you lose your job or your income drops."

An income-driven plan like REPAYE is also the only one that will ensure your payments are eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness if you're working full time for an eligible employer.

If you take on loans from private lenders, you may want to consider [refinancing your student loans](#) for a lower interest rate, which depends on your credit score. Proceed with caution when it comes to refinancing federal loans, though, as you could lose access to income-based repayment programs as well as potential student loan forgiveness.

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[Erin El Issa](#) writes for NerdWallet.

The article [College-Bound Grads Could Exit With \\$38K Student Loan Debt](#) originally appeared on NerdWallet on May 4, 2021.



DON'T SKIP THESE STEPS WHEN BORROWING PARENT STUDENT LOANS

By Ryan Lane

In more than one-third of U.S. families, parents decide how to pay for college, according to a July 2020 report from private lender Sallie Mae.

Half of those parents don't inform the child of their decision.

Joe Allen, 51, of Frederick, Maryland, did talk about college costs with his daughter, a freshman at the University of Dayton in Ohio. But he understands why some families avoid the topic.

"As a parent, you want to protect your children," Allen says. "You want to do what's best for them."

But what seems best for children may be bad for mom or dad – especially if it means taking out hefty [parent student loans](#) without discussing them. Here's how to avoid that misstep and others when borrowing parent loans.

Assess your situation

Students should exhaust free money and federal loans in their names to pay for college. Parents can then cover the remaining costs with federal parent PLUS loans or private loans.

But first, review your current financial situation with your child.

"Have a realistic sit-down with yourself and your family in terms of what (your) finances look like and what's the best decision for you," says Rick Castellano, spokesperson for Sallie Mae.

Don't borrow parent student loans if they'll put your retirement at risk, you're deep in debt or [you can't afford the payments](#). For example, the nonprofit Trellis Company surveyed more than 59,000 parents whose children attended school in Texas and found that most said they struggled with loan repayment at some point.

Have a conversation

Kathleen Burns Kingsbury, a wealth psychology expert and host of the Breaking Money Silence podcast, says talking about big expenses like college tuition can make people uncomfortable and emotional.

That doesn't mean you should avoid the conversation.



"It's OK if people get upset," Kingsbury says. "The pitfall is if people get upset and don't get back to it."

Instead, use this opportunity to talk about how much you'll borrow and to teach your child how to analyze the value of a large purchase.

Allen says he went through a sample budget with his daughter to illustrate the cost of her loans and how they might limit her flexibility in the future.

He liked that the exercise made things more concrete than "just saying don't take out debt."

Figure out who's responsible

A conversation is also necessary to determine who'll repay the parent's loans.

If your child will – and 45% of families expect the parent and child to at least share this responsibility, according to [the Sallie Mae report](#) – that can affect your decisions.

Angela Colatriano, chief marketing officer for College Ave Student Loans, says some families want the child's name on the loan because he or she will repay it.

"They don't want a handshake agreement," she says.

But only the [parent is legally responsible](#) for a parent PLUS loan. You'll need to weigh that when considering borrowing options.

PLUS loans have less stringent credit requirements than private loans and offer everyone the same fixed interest rate. However, PLUS loans also have large origination fees and are available only to parents – guardians and grandparents aren't eligible, for example.

Your ultimate goal should be getting the least expensive loan you qualify for. If that's a PLUS loan, make sure everyone is on the same page for repayment.

Kingsbury suggests writing a simple, one-page agreement that "would spell out what the expectation is and what happens if there's a conflict."

Consider co-signing

Parents who prefer private loans can borrow in their name or [co-sign with their dependent](#). Either option means you'll be responsible for the loan.

"It comes down to a family decision," Castellano says. "Families should explore both options."

But he says that co-signing can benefit students in ways that borrowing on your own can't, such as helping them build credit.

Also, because a co-signed loan has two applicants, you may get a better interest rate. However, lender underwriting policies differ.

For example, Allen initially got a much higher rate on a co-signed loan than he expected. The lender told him that was because it combined his credit score with his daughter's.

"I didn't understand that," Allen says. "I thought if I'm co-signing and bringing good credit to the equation it should be a better rate."

He applied with a different lender and got what he called a "much better" rate. Allen plans to take out that loan once his family can no longer fund the education on their own.



[Ryan Lane](#) is a writer at NerdWallet.

The article [Don't Skip These Steps When Borrowing Parent Student Loans](#) originally appeared on NerdWallet on November 3, 2020.

MASTERING YOUR MONEY JUST GOT A LOT EASIER

FINANCIAL AVENUE AND THE KNOWL



Inceptia can work with your student's school to provide a leg up on financial education with our online program, Financial Avenue. Financial Avenue offers smart resources to help demystify the world of personal finance. Trust us – getting a handle on your money doesn't have to feel overwhelming or restrictive. It's all about empowering students with smart basics, and planning from there.

With Inceptia's money mascot – the Knowl – as a trusty guide, students can choose from ten online courses that take on big financial topics without snore-inducing jargon. Using quizzes, videos, interactive tools, and easy-to-understand tips, the Knowl explains subjects such as paying for college, budgeting, credit and identity theft, career planning, managing student loans, understanding a paycheck, and even bigger concepts like the psychology of money, which helps you to understand your personal relationship with money, and why you spend the way you do.

Getting started is easy. Ask your student's teacher to visit [Inceptia.org/high-school-access-code](https://www.inceptia.org/high-school-access-code) to create an account and receive an access code to share with you. Before you know it, your teen will be so money-savvy that she or he may have some advice for you!

www.financialavenue.org



More From NerdWallet

For more great articles and tips from NerdWallet, be sure to check out their [online guide to the FAFSA](#).

About Inceptia

Inceptia, a division of National Student Loan Program (NSLP), is a nonprofit organization committed to offering effective and uncomplicated solutions in verification, financial aid management, financial education, and repayment wellness. For more than 35 years, Inceptia and NSLP have helped millions of students achieve their higher education dreams at schools nationwide. Our mission is to support schools in illuminating a path towards educational and financial success for students and families, allowing them to pursue their dreams of reaching their full potential. Our solutions are designed to support student success by helping financial aid administrators maximize resources, so they can spend more time delivering meaningful learning experiences across the student lifecycle that fosters education and personal development. Learn more at [Inceptia.org](https://inceptia.org).



Talk to Us

talktous@inceptia.org

888.529.2028

 @inceptia

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