

WELLS
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— YOUR —
5-STEP GUIDE
to paying for college





Learn how to pay for college with these 5 steps

Knowing how you're going to pay for college is one of the most powerful ways you can set yourself up for success.

This guide is designed to help you estimate your education costs and understand the different options available to help you pay for them.

Simply follow the 5-step process:



Find more online

Check out our video on the financial aid process at wellsfargo.com/fivesteps



Set calendar reminders for important deadlines

Staying on top of time-sensitive action items, like scholarships, grant applications, and the FAFSA, is key to getting the money you need for college. As you go through each step, look for the reminder icon (to the left) for guidance on when setting a reminder might help you stay on track throughout the financial aid process. Also check with your school counselor and college on other important deadlines you will want to remember.

Step 1

Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Regardless of income, all families should complete the FAFSA annually because it is required for all federal financial aid and most state and institutional aid. **To get started, go to fafsa.ed.gov to apply (see chart on page 4).** You will need to complete the form each year you plan to attend college, and the sooner you complete the FAFSA, the more financial aid you may receive.

Types of financial aid you might be eligible for after completing the FAFSA

Pell Grants provide need-based grants to undergraduate students. The money doesn't have to be repaid (unless you withdraw from school before finishing an enrollment period).

State aid is primarily available to students who attend a college in their state of residence.

Institutional aid is provided by public and private colleges and universities to help their students pay for tuition and fees.

Federal Work Study Programs are offered by colleges to help their students earn money by working part-time.

Federal Direct Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized) are available to undergraduate and graduate students attending college at least half-time. These loans will need to be repaid.

Here's how it works:

- ✓ Set up your personal Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) to access, complete, and submit the FAFSA online at fsaid.ed.gov.
- ✓ Complete your application as soon as possible after the FAFSA start date each year you plan to attend college.
- ✓ You will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) within three weeks of completing your FAFSA. The SAR is a summary of your aid eligibility and answers on the FAFSA form. Review your SAR carefully to ensure it's correct and complete.



Want a preview?

If you'd like an estimate of the amount of aid you may be eligible for before you complete the FAFSA, use the online forecasting calculator at fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/f4cForm




Guess what?

Now you can file your FAFSA even sooner.



Here's why it's helpful:

Schools may be able to send awards earlier, which could give you a clearer picture of your aid availability, which could alert you sooner as to whether or not your awarded financial aid will cover your full college costs.

 **Enter your tax information — in a click**

Here's what you should know:

Starting for the 2017–2018 school year, you can submit your FAFSA as early as October 1 (instead of January 1) and use slightly older tax information. You'll still have until June 30 to complete the FAFSA, but it's best to get your application in as soon as possible.

Attending College (School Year)	When a Student Can Submit a FAFSA	Required Year's Income Information
July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017	January 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017	2015
July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018	October 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018	2015
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019	October 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019	2016

The FAFSA offers the option to transfer tax information into an application by using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (IRS DRT).

By using an earlier year's tax return, there's no longer a delay between the time you file taxes and when you can transfer them into your FAFSA. As a result, more students and parents will be able to use the IRS DRT than ever before.



Use the chart above to set your reminder annually, because you need to reapply for the FAFSA each year you plan to attend college.

Step 2

Apply for scholarships

To get started with your scholarship search, visit Tuition Funding Sources at [tuitionfundingsources.com](https://www.tuitionfundingsources.com), a database with more than 7 million scholarships totaling more than \$41 billion to help pay for college. Best of all, the scholarships are available for any students — those who are planning for college, already there, or working toward a graduate degree.

Here's how it works:

- ✓ Create a profile at [tuitionfundingsources.com](https://www.tuitionfundingsources.com)
- ✓ Make an ongoing list of scholarships that you may be eligible to receive
- ✓ Start researching as early as your freshman year of high school and continue applying throughout your college career
- ✓ Set aside a dedicated amount of time each week to research, apply for, and check the status of your scholarships
- ✓ Give yourself plenty of time for the scholarship application process. And remember, getting money you won't need to repay is worth it in the end.



There are more than **\$41 billion** in scholarship opportunities up for grabs at *Tuition Funding Sources*

Maximize your scholarship search with these tips:

Make the time

Determination pays off with scholarship applications — especially since it's money you don't have to repay. So make your applications part of your weekly routine, and apply for as many as you can.

Master the essay

Application committees are looking for what sets you apart. So hone in on your own inspirational qualities and craft your essays around them.

Consider who you know

Some workplaces and civic groups offer scholarships, so ask your family if they have any connections.

Little amounts add up

For every \$20,000 prize, there are thousands of smaller awards that receive far fewer applicants. Seek out all possible options regardless of amount — it all adds up.

Get an editor

Find someone who wants to help you with your scholarship search, and ask them to review your applications for grammar and flow.

Talk with the financial aid office

If you know where you're going to college, check with the school's financial aid office to see if they can help you with your search.



Begin in August/September, continue year-round:

Start the school year with a scholarship plan, and don't give up.



Find additional scholarship resources

Receive helpful information on searching for scholarships when you sign up for the **CollegeSTEPS**® program at [wellsfargo.com/collegesteps](https://www.wellsfargo.com/collegesteps)

Step 3

Estimate and compare your total college costs

Next, get an early indication of what your estimated college costs may look like by searching your college's or university's website for its Net Price Calculator (NPC). This tool will **estimate** your total costs based on your personal situation and will help you understand what types of financial aid resources may be available. Once you know that, you'll be able to compare the costs, options, and opportunities available to you at different schools.

The NPC has you enter information about yourself — from financial status to grades or even community service history — to find out what students like you might pay to attend the institution. Then it deducts any aid your family may be eligible for, calculating the total cost.

Here's how it works:

- ✓ Go to your college's or university's website and search for the Net Price Calculator
- ✓ Enter the required data
- ✓ See the estimated costs for one year at that school
- ✓ Find out what financial aid may be available

It's important to remember the estimate given by one school's calculator may be very different from another school's because of the data requested — for example, one school may ask for the income range of your parents, while another may ask for the specific dollar amount of their salaries.



August/September through November:

Before you rule out a certain college based on cost, use the NPC. The total cost may be more reasonable than you expected.

Check out these additional resources:



For side-by-side comparisons

Try College Abacus (collegeabacus.org) to see how college costs stack up between your favorite schools. Just create a profile and save the results from your college searches, then compare up to three at one time. (Note: this tool may not be able to gain access to select schools' NPCs.)



For a deeper look at a college's cost

Try College Scorecard (collegescorecard.ed.gov), the new tool from the Department of Education. It can help you get a more informed view of a specific school, including costs.



Play with the variables

See how your total cost might change with different variables like living on campus, off campus, or at home.

Step 4

Determine if you need additional money for college

After getting an early estimate of your education costs, you can begin determining what your actual college costs will look like once you receive the award letters from the schools you're considering. These award letters are based on your FAFSA application, tell you how much you can expect in grants and financial aid, and vary from school to school.

Evaluate each award letter carefully to see how your expenses may vary from school to school. Use this chart to review your options and determine whether you may need additional money for college.

If you don't need additional money, you're all done.

Figure out if you need more money for college. Here's how:

1. Add up the costs for each school

Enter the total cost for each school you're comparing:

	Sample			
Total cost of tuition, fees, and room and board	\$10,000			
Other projected costs like books, gas, cell phone	\$5,000			
Total cost	\$15,000			

2. Subtract the financial aid you'll receive

Enter the financial aid listed on your award letter from each school:

	Sample			
Grants	\$2,000			
Scholarships	\$3,000			
Federal student loans	\$5,000			
Federal Work Study Program	\$0			
Other	\$0			
Total funding received from the school	\$10,000			

3. Determine whether you'll need additional money for college

After you calculate your expenses and financial aid for each school, you'll be able to evaluate your financial situation. If you still need money for college, check out the additional options detailed in Step 5.

	Sample			
Additional funds required	\$5,000			



February to April:

Review your award letters and decide which ones best match your needs.



Weigh your options: Carefully weigh all your choices before you select a financial aid option. Award letters provide the maximum amount of aid a school can offer you, so if you've received enough funds through other sources, you can scale the offer back. Likewise, if you still have additional expenses, low-cost federal loan options or private student loans may help provide the money you need for college.

Step 5

Explore additional college financing options

If the financial aid you receive from the school doesn't cover your total college costs, and other funding sources — like savings accounts, income, or 529 plans — aren't enough, you may want to explore other federal and private financing options that may be available.

Additional options

Tuition payment plans may be available by colleges to help their students pay tuition in installments instead of one lump sum at the start of the semester. A payment plan may allow you to pay tuition in interest-free monthly installments — rather than one lump sum. You may be able to:

- Spread your tuition payments over a period of several months
- Use a payment plan in place of a traditional student loan to make monthly payments or use it along with your student loans and financial aid

Federal Direct PLUS Loans are credit-based student loans offered by the federal government. These loans are available to graduate or professional degree students and parents of dependent undergraduate students.

Private or alternative student loans are credit-based student loans, which may be available for graduates, undergraduates, professional degrees, or qualified certificate or licensure programs. There may also be financing options available for anyone (such as a parent, relative, or sponsor) who may be interested in borrowing to help the student pay for college. These loans are provided by banks or other lenders.

Here's how it works:

Your family's circumstances and preferences will help determine what options may fit your situation. As you explore your options, it's important to:

- ✓ Research all financing programs carefully by comparing eligibility requirements, interest rates, loan costs and fees, repayment options, and monthly payments.
- ✓ Line up a cosigner who may help you qualify for a private student loan. A cosigner can be a family member, friend, or anyone who meets the eligibility requirements.
- ✓ Ideally, your total student loan debt should not exceed the salary you expect to earn your first year working after college.



Forecast the future: You can estimate your post-graduation salary at the U.S. Department of Labor website using its employment projections and median annual income data. Check it out at bls.gov/emp.

Read the fine print: While the Federal Direct PLUS Loan terms are the same for every borrower, private student loan terms will vary by lender based on your financial situation and credit. Be sure to understand the pros and cons of each financing option before you make a choice.



March to July:

Crunch the numbers and apply for any additional financing you may need.



Your financial aid checkpoints, at a glance

Remember to set your calendar reminders

August/September

- Begin your year-long scholarship search with a visit to tuitionfundingsources.com
- Get an estimate on your federal aid eligibility at fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/f4cForm
- Compare estimated college costs and aid availability with the NPC tools of your top colleges

October

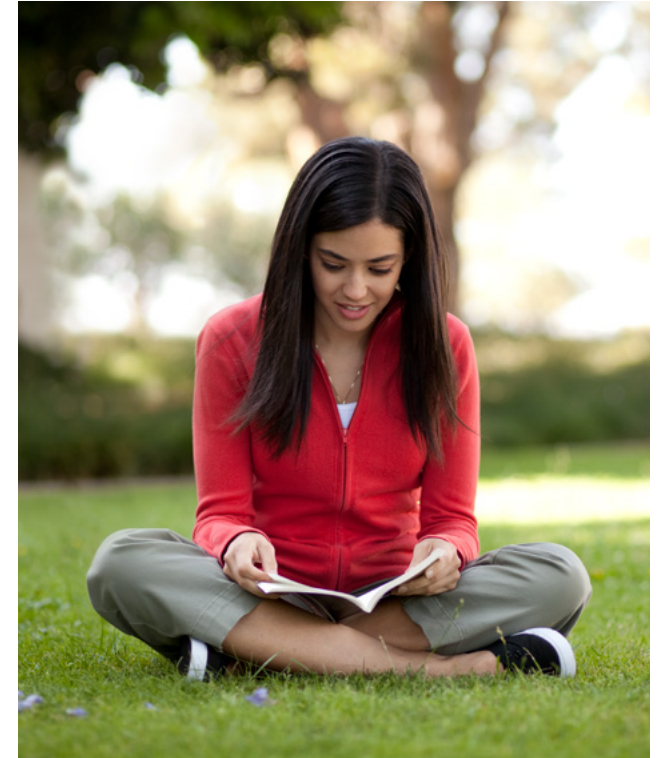
- Create your FSA ID at fsaid.ed.gov
- Complete your FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1 every year you plan to attend college at fafsa.ed.gov
- Check if your college requires you to complete additional aid applications

November – May

- After you receive your SAR, carefully ensure all information is correct and complete
- Be on the lookout for financial aid award letters
- Review and compare award letters to determine whether awarded financial aid and family resources cover college costs
- Apply for additional financing, if needed

June/July

- Be on the lookout for your college bills, and make sure costs are covered by financial aid and family resources. Then, double-check to make sure you have the money you need to cover college expenses



Be sure to contact your college to learn about its specific requirements and deadlines, as not all deadlines are the same for every school.

Helpful tools and resources

If you're planning for college, already in school, or a parent of a student, take advantage of the wide range of free information available:



Wells Fargo CollegeSTEPS® program

Receive college planning and money management tips, tools, and resources by signing up at wellsfargo.com/collegesteps



Tuition Funding Sources

Get access to over 7 million scholarships totaling more than \$41 billion to help pay for college at tuitionfundingsources.com



Path to credit videos

Find videos and information to help you get on the path to understanding credit and the benefits it may provide at wellsfargo.com/pathtocredit



The Student LoanDownSM blog

Check out conversations focused on everything from college planning to paying back your student loans at <http://blogs.wf.com/studentloandown>



Calculators and tools for student loans

Estimate private student loan payments, how much you may need to borrow, and more at wellsfargo.com/student/calculators



My Financial Guide

Find resources on budgeting, choosing a college, finding scholarships, and more at wellsfargo.com/financial-education



Student Center

Whether you are in high school, preparing for college, or about to graduate, we're here to support you every step of the way. Visit us at wellsfargo.com/studentcenter



Student Loan Consultant

Speak with a Wells Fargo Student Loan Consultant who can help you navigate the college financial aid process from start to finish at **1-877-373-8797**



Find out more about private student loans

Use your cell phone or computer to access more information at wellsfargo.com/student

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