



How To Leave College With Little Debt

Go to Community College First

No matter your family's income, community college is always going to be cheaper than a 4-year institution. These schools often have the same quality of education for a fraction of the cost. Many students find that the cost of tuition is so low that they may receive a refund which can be used to purchase things like books, a laptop, or even a used car!

Attend an In-State School for Tuition Discounts

In-State public schools offer quality education for a fraction of the price of private schools. Unless you have a very specific reason for attending a specific private institution (such as being a part of certain research opportunities or desiring an unconventional education structure)

Opt to Commute or Not Live on Campus

Living on campus at many schools can contribute to $\frac{1}{3}$ or more of the cost. By opting to live at home, you may be able to save money. If living at home is not an option, it may be cheaper and more beneficial to rent a room in an apartment than to live on campus.

- **Pros:** having access to a kitchen, so having more control over your diet, more control over your comings and goings (no curfew), your allowed guests, not sharing a bathroom with 15+ people, and continuous housing in the summer.
- **Cons:** being responsible for cleaning, living in closer quarters with fewer people might be irritating, being responsible for paying bills and rent (as opposed to having room and board payments dispersed by Bursars on your behalf), having to cook for yourself.

Apply for As Many Scholarships as Possible

Casting a wide net of scholarship applications can lead to higher chances of receiving extra funds.

Scholarships can be a source of payment to outstanding tuition bills, but be very careful about the terms. If the scholarship is only for one year, you must create a plan for how you will come up with the money next year. If the scholarship covers 4 years, then you must make sure that you either graduate within that time frame, or that you know how you'll pay for school if you exceed 4 years in undergrad.

Get Good Grades And Do Extracurricular Activities For Scholarship Funding

(Also seek out schools that give this funding specifically)

No matter if you buy into the American Education System or not, grades are used by colleges as a means to evaluate your ability to succeed in their institutions.

As a result, you must play the game in order to win the prize. By making an effort to keep your grades high and by having a variety of extra curriculars, you can increase your chances of earning merit-based scholarships from schools to which you apply.

Seek Out Schools That Meet More Than 90% Need.

When searching for schools, opt to apply to schools that have an average of 90% need met or higher. A quick Google search of the school name can show this average. This is because these schools are more likely to give you more grant and scholarship aid, which lowers debt and out-of-pocket cost.

Avoid taking out an Unsubsidized Loan (when using federal loans), and instead pay the amount that it was supposed to cover.

This is because Unsub loans collect interest while you are in school and so they are more expensive in the long run. A Subsidized loan can be an okay way to temporarily cover costs, as they do not collect interest as long as you are enrolled in a degree-granting institution at least part-time.