



HOW TO MANAGE YOUR COLLEGE COSTS

College often involves additional expenses that go beyond a school's published cost of attendance—from pizza to plane tickets. This checklist can help you avoid budget-busting surprises and keep those extras under control.

ACADEMICS

FINISH IN FOUR

Taking five or six years to earn a BA is the costliest mistake many students make. Work with your college adviser to stay on track. If you want to change majors, do it by the end of sophomore year, before you get deep into courses that won't count toward the new major.

TAME TEXTBOOK EXPENSES

Don't buy or rent books until you see your professor's syllabus. If you need to study only 10 pages of a \$150 book, read it at the library. You can save up to 50% if you rent or buy used books online (try AbeBooks.com or Chegg.com). Or trade texts with friends by taking required courses in different semesters.

BUDGET FOR STUDY ABROAD

Study-abroad programs are great for personal growth, but travel expenses can add up fast. If you want to go, skip pricey Western Europe and instead try Central or South America, where your money will stretch further.

ROOM AND BOARD

DECORATE ON THE CHEAP

College students currently spend an average of \$125 a year on dorm or apartment furnishings. To save, ask if your school recycles the stuff left behind by students who have graduated. Hunt for bargains at craigslist.org, freecycle.org, or Uloop.com.

MANAGE YOUR MEAL PLAN

Avoid paying for food you won't eat by starting with the cheapest dining plan your college offers. If that isn't adequate, switch to a more generous one. Also watch your grocery bills. If you cook for yourself, the government says you can budget as little as \$40 a week or so and still eat healthfully.

PLAN FOR POCKET MONEY

Seemingly minor expenses like Friday night pizzas, afternoon energy drinks, and the occasional candy bar can become a major drain on your funds. Figure on about \$2,000 a year for those out-of-pocket expenses.

EXTRACURRICULARS

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO GREEK

Joining a fraternity or sorority can add about \$1,000 to \$3,500 a year to your college costs, not including housing. But depending on the college, living in a fraternity or sorority house can sometimes save you money on room and board.

TRIM TRAVEL COSTS

Get your finals schedule ASAP and search for low fares far in advance of your travel dates. Check out StudentAdvantage.com for discounts on Amtrak and Greyhound. Also compare prices at BestBus and Megabus. To share rides, try Facebook, Zimride.com, or RideshareOnline.com.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

Students with part-time jobs can not only defray their expenses but also get résumé-worthy experience. Just don't overdo it: Students who work more than 15 hours a week are less successful in college, research shows.



Where should my kid go to college?

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