



# Off to College



**Start early (like right now) to learn about options for paying for college.**



There's a lot you'll need to learn when it comes to paying for college. SunTrust has put together this guidebook to help you understand it all. Read on, and you should get a good idea of your financing choices, which may include a combination of different financing resources. You'll find additional information on our Web site at [offtocollege.info](http://offtocollege.info). If you have more questions, give us a call at 800.552.3006.

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## How much money will you need?

Before exploring the ways you can get money for college, follow these three easy steps to estimate how much financial aid you need:

1 *List all of your financial resources.*

Look at how much you and your family can contribute to your education expenses and list it on the budget worksheet (at right). Include scholarships and grants. Keep loans as your last resort.

2 *Determine your expenses for the first year.*

You may still be considering several schools, and the costs for each will vary. But put in a dollar amount for each item, even if it's just your best guess. Monthly expenses should be multiplied by nine to get the nine months of a typical school year.

3 *Subtract your expenses from your resources.*

If you're like most students, the difference will be a negative number. That means there is a "funding gap" between what it takes to fund your education and what you have saved for college. This is where financial aid comes in.

# School budget worksheet

## YOUR RESOURCES

Your available savings	
Your parents' contribution	
Work/work-study	
Scholarships/grants	
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL RESOURCES</b>	<b>\$</b>

## ESTIMATED ANNUAL EXPENSES

Tuition, fees, books & supplies	
Housing/rent & utilities/phone	
Food/meals	
Medical/dental	
Recreation/entertainment	
Clothing/cleaning	
Travel expenses including bus, plane, car (gas & repairs), parking	
Car/medical insurance	
All other expenses*	
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$</b>

\*Including contributions to savings, credit card payments, and any other expenses not listed.

<b>TOTAL ANNUAL RESOURCES MINUS TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$</b>
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If the above amount is negative, this is your funding gap.

## What types of financial aid are out there?

### Scholarships and Grants

Generally, these do not have to be repaid. Schools provide scholarships to students because of outstanding academic performance, certain areas of study or excellence in sports, music, art, and other extracurricular activities. Scholarships are usually based on merit while grants are generally based on financial need. To start your search for scholarships, go to the SunTrust Education Loans Web site, [offtocollege.info](http://offtocollege.info). While there, check out the SunTrust Off To College Scholarship Sweepstakes (no application necessary to enter or win).

### Federal Pell Grant

This is the basic federal grant program for undergraduate students enrolled either full- or half-time. Eligibility is based on financial need and is usually granted to students with lower Expected Family Contributions (EFCs).

### Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)

This grant is available to undergraduate students who are also eligible for a Pell Grant and is based on financial need, depending on how much financial aid they already receive. Funds for this program are limited.

### Federal Work-Study

Work-study makes it possible for you to offset some of your college costs by working a part-time job. Combining work-study with other aid can help limit the amount of loan money you'll have to borrow and then repay. But remember that work-study dollars are usually paid directly to you just like a paycheck, not automatically applied to your tuition.

### Federal Perkins Loan

This loan is available to both undergraduate and graduate students and based on financial need. The interest rate is fixed at 5%, and you won't have to start paying interest or making payments on the principal until nine months after you graduate (or drop below half-time status). Perkins Loans are administered by the school, so contact the college(s) you are considering for an application and more information.

New borrowing limits for Federal Perkins Loans, effective August 14, 2008:

- \$5,500 for each undergraduate school year
- \$27,500 total for all undergraduate education
- \$8,000 for each graduate school year
- \$60,000 for all undergraduate and graduate education combined

## Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP)

The Federal Family Education Loan Program is a program in which loans are insured by the federal government in order to keep interest rates low. The loans themselves are offered by private lenders such as banks (SunTrust Bank, for example), credit unions, and other financial institutions.

Many schools use a recommended list of lenders for federal education loans. However, you have the right to choose any lender even if they do not appear on your school's recommended list.

Your school may participate in the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program, also referred to simply as Direct Lending. This means that any federal loans you take out while attending school will be borrowed directly from the federal government, not from a bank or other financial institution. The loan process is similar to what is described in this booklet, but please check with your school for specific details about Direct Lending.

*The FFELP program provides the following types of loans:*

- **Subsidized Stafford Loan.** This loan is based on your financial need as an undergraduate or graduate student. The interest rates are fixed: 5.60%\* for undergraduates and 6.80%\*\* for graduate students. This is a subsidized loan, which means the federal government pays the interest for you as long as you're in school at least half-time. Repayment starts six months after you graduate or your attendance drops to less than half-time.

Your school has to certify or approve that you're eligible and how much you'll be borrowing. You can get an application from your lender or school. Borrowing limits are combined with the limits on Unsubsidized Stafford Loans.

- **Unsubsidized Stafford Loan.** Since this loan is not based on financial need, you may be eligible no matter what income and assets you and your family have. The interest rate is fixed at 6.80%\*\* . This loan is unsubsidized so the government does not pay the interest for you while you're in school.

You are responsible for paying the interest from the time the money is disbursed. You can pay the interest as it comes due, or interest payments may be postponed and allowed to accumulate while you are in school at least half-time and during the six-month grace period. The accumulated interest is added to your original loan amount when you begin repayment. This is called capitalization.

*continued on page 6*

\*\* Rate effective for new loans disbursed on or after July 1, 2009. Due to the origination and default fees, actual APRs will be higher.

\*\* Rate effective for new loans disbursed on or after July 1, 2006. Due to the origination and default fees, actual APRs will be higher.

## Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP)—cont.

Combined borrowing limits<sup>§</sup> for Subsidized and Unsubsidized Stafford Loans:

- \$5,500 for freshman year
- \$6,500 for sophomore year
- \$7,500 for each remaining undergraduate year
- \$31,000 total for all undergraduate years

Keep in mind, the money you receive may be less than the loan amount because processing fees may be deducted from the amount borrowed as follows:

- Origination fee, up to 0.50% of the full disbursed amount\*\*, paid to the federal government
- Default fee, up to 1% of the full disbursed amount, paid to the guarantor

For example, a first-year student who is approved for \$5,500 in Stafford Loan funds may only receive approximately \$5,417.50 after fees are deducted.

Loan amount	\$ 5,500.00
Origination fee	– 27.50
Default fee	– 55.00
<b>FUNDS RECEIVED</b>	<b>\$ 5,417.50</b>

## PLUS Loans for Parents

Not based on financial need, PLUS Loans are available regardless of the income and assets that your parent(s) have. However, credit guidelines do apply in determining eligibility. Your parents can borrow up to your total cost of attendance, minus any financial aid you receive.

The interest rate on a PLUS Loan is fixed at 8.50% and is charged from the time the loan is completely disbursed.\*\*\* Parent PLUS loans go into repayment 60 days after loan funds are fully disbursed to the school. As of July 1, 2008, parents may choose to defer payments until six months after the student graduates or drops below half-time status.

While PLUS Loans are administered by lenders, your school has to certify or approve the loan. You can get an application from either your lender or school.

<sup>§</sup> Limits for undergraduate students claimed as dependents by their parents.

\*\* Origination fee of 0.50% effective July 1, 2009.

\*\*\* Rate effective for new loans disbursed on or after July 1, 2006. An origination fee of 3% and a default fee of 1% will be calculated based on, and deducted from, each disbursement. Due to the origination and default fees, actual APRs will be higher.

## Private Education Loans

Sometimes scholarships, grants, and federal financial aid don't cover all the expenses associated with paying for school. Many lenders offer alternative or private education loans to help bridge the gap between your financial aid package and what you and your family can realistically pay.

Private loans are available regardless of financial need; however, credit guidelines do apply. Students often need to use a parent or other adult as a cosigner to be eligible. Loan amounts, rates, fees, and repayment periods vary by lender.

SunTrust offers a private education loan to help students and parents meet a broad range of financing needs. Our Academic Answer<sup>®</sup> Loan is a private loan option that offers great money-saving benefits. Please call SunTrust Education Loans at 800.552.3006 for more information on private loans, or visit [suntrustededucation.com/academicanswer](http://suntrustededucation.com/academicanswer).

## Federal Loans Repayment Examples

This chart will help estimate monthly payments if you and/or your parents borrow money for college through a Subsidized or Unsubsidized Stafford Loan or a PLUS Loan. Remember, Stafford borrowers have a six-month grace period after graduating or leaving school before repayment begins. Repayment on PLUS Loans begins 60 days after full disbursement, or parents may choose to defer payments until six months after the student graduates or drops below half-time status.

AMOUNT BORROWED	STAFFORD Undergraduate Subsidized 5.60% Fixed (effective 7/1/09) Monthly Payment <sup>†</sup>	STAFFORD All Unsubsidized & Graduate Subsidized 6.80% Fixed (effective 7/1/06) Monthly Payment <sup>†</sup>	PARENT PLUS & GRAD PLUS 8.50% Fixed (effective 7/1/06) Monthly Payment <sup>†</sup>
\$ 5,500	\$ 60	\$ 81	\$ 91
\$ 7,500	\$ 82	\$ 110	\$ 125
\$ 10,500	\$ 114	\$ 154	\$ 174
\$ 15,500	\$ 169	\$ 227	\$ 258
\$ 20,500	\$ 224	\$ 300	\$ 341

<sup>†</sup>Payment examples are based on a 10-year term, standard repayment plan, and are rounded to the nearest whole dollar. The Amount Borrowed figures include a 1% default fee and 0.5% origination fee for the Stafford examples and a 1% default fee and 3% origination fee for the PLUS examples. Payment examples assume no payments have been made while in school and include capitalization of accrued interest, which occurs at the end of the grace period on unsubsidized loans. Deferment is 45 months and grace is 6 months for a total of 51 months. Actual Annual Percentage Rates (APRs) will exceed the interest rates denoted above.

## Improve your chances of getting aid

### Do the following:

- Apply for admissions to your college(s) as early as possible, because a school will not process your application for financial aid until you are accepted.
- Fill out all your applications completely and accurately—watch deadlines! (See the tear-out calendar.)
- Apply for aid from a wide variety of sources. Millions of dollars worth of aid go unclaimed every year. You may be turned down if you do apply, but you definitely won't get any money if you don't apply. And the more places you apply, the better chance you have of getting money.
- You can also increase your chances by applying for all financial aid as early as possible. There are lots of qualified students across the country, and the money often goes to those whose applications are approved first.
- Save a copy of all your applications and correspondence.



## Where to look for financial aid

There are thousands of scholarships and grants available across the country. This will give you an idea of how to begin your search.

### Talk to your advisors.

Ask your high school counselor for advice and ideas on scholarships and grants. Also, talk with the financial aid office at the school or schools you're considering applying to.

### Search the Internet.

Start with the SunTrust Education Loans Web site, [oftocollege.info](http://oftocollege.info). This site's free, easy-to-use search engine can connect you with the resources for more than 1.6 million scholarships, grants, and awards.

### Make sure you explore every opportunity.

Here are a few more places where financial aid might be available:

- State grants, loans, and other programs for residents of your state
- City and/or county programs
- College-related foundations
- Businesses (check with your employer or your parents' employer), professional, and corporate organizations
- Civic, cultural, and religious groups, and fraternal and charitable associations
- "Sponsor Scholarships" provided by companies that manufacture or sell goods and services you use
- Unions to which you or your parents belong
- The Veterans Administration or other veterans' groups
- State congressional offices

## Are you eligible for federal financial aid?

To qualify for federal financial aid, you must meet the following qualifications:

- Demonstrate financial need (except for certain loans)
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate, pass a test approved by the U.S. Department of Education, meet other standards your state establishes that the Department approves, or complete a high school education in a home school setting that is treated as such under state law
- Be working towards a degree or certificate in an eligible program
- Possess a valid Social Security Number (unless you're from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau)
- If you are a male, you must be registered with Select Service
- Must maintain satisfactory academic progress once in school
- Certify that you are not in default on a federal student loan and do not owe money on a federal student grant
- Certify that you will use federal student aid only for educational purposes

If you have been convicted of an illegal drug offense, you may be ineligible to receive federal financial aid.

For more details on eligibility, you can receive a free copy of *Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid*. Ask your school for a copy or visit the Department of Education Web site at [studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student\\_guide/index.html](http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html).

*Don't assume that your family income is too high to receive any aid or too low to receive enough aid. Need analysis is free and many times students get money they never expected.*

## Determining your eligibility for financial aid

Each school has a Cost of Attendance which includes:

- Tuition and fees
- Books and supplies
- Room and board
- Transportation
- Personal and miscellaneous expenses

To help meet the Cost of Attendance, you and your parents will probably be asked to make an Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The process for determining the EFC is called need analysis and is administered by the federal government.

Your first step to receiving financial aid is to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is the basis on which most student aid – including federal loans, grants, and aid from private sources and colleges – is awarded.

You can get this application from your high school counselor or your college's financial aid office. Or you can submit electronically at [fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov). If you have questions or need help completing the FAFSA, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 800.433.3243 or visit their Web site at [fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov).



## The FAFSA asks for personal financial information from you and your parents, if you are a dependent student.

*This information includes:*

- Taxable income (including but not limited to wages and some portions of Social Security)
- Non-taxable income (e.g., contributions from retirement accounts)
- Assets (bank accounts, stocks, bonds, real estate other than primary residence, other investments, and business net worth)

The government begins accepting the FAFSA form on January 1, so send yours in as soon after that date as possible during your senior year in high school (see the tear-out calendar). Many institutional and state-administered grant programs require the FAFSA to be submitted by a specific date. Be sure to keep these dates in mind. Within one to two weeks of submitting your FAFSA online, copies of your Student Aid Report (SAR) will be sent to you and up to six colleges of your choice.

The SAR contains your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is subtracted from your school's Cost of Attendance. The result is your financial need. Of course, your need will be more at a high-cost school and less at a low-cost school. But your EFC stays the same regardless of which school you attend.

Your SAR also contains your eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant. Your eligibility for Pell Grants must be determined before you can apply for a Federal Stafford Loan.

The financial aid staff at your school will evaluate your SAR to see if you're eligible for additional grants (including FSEOG), work-study, loans, and other types of aid. If you have requested financial aid and have been accepted for admission, the school will prepare a financial aid package and send an award letter to you. It lists the types and amount of aid the school offers you.

### Federal tax incentives

Federal and state tax benefits are available to help students and parents pay for higher education after high school. Please refer to *IRS Publication 970 – Tax Benefits for Higher Education* and contact your tax advisor for complete details. The financial aid office at your school may also provide helpful information.

## What do you think of your aid package?

When considering your financial aid package, ask yourself these questions:

- *Does this school's Cost of Attendance include things that you don't need or that would be less expensive at another school?*
- *Can you afford the costs – beyond your Expected Family Contribution – not covered by the financial aid package?*
- *How much of this financial aid package is paid for by grants and work-study, and how much is made up of loans (which you must repay)?*
- *Do the loans offered in this financial aid package have terms that are less attractive than other kinds of loans?*
- *Is all or part of your financial aid package renewable?*
- *How tough are the conditions for renewing this financial aid package in the years following your freshman year of college?*

If you decide to accept some or all of the aid offered, you may need to sign and return a copy of the award letter. If federal loans are part of the aid package, the school may provide you with a list of their recommended lenders.

Remember, you have the right to choose any lender you wish, even if they are not listed on your school's recommended list. Get in touch with your lender and request a loan application. Or call us at 800.552.3006 for a complete application kit. Our Education Loan Specialists can walk you through the process step-by-step. Applications are also available on our Web site at [ofttocollege.info](http://ofttocollege.info).

Also, if you are not satisfied with the financial aid package the school offers, it is your right to refuse all or part of it. Before making any decision, talk with your financial aid officer. They may be able to help you find additional types of aid.

## Beware of scams and frauds

There are more and more reports of frauds who pose as financial aid service providers. Be sure to stay away from:

- Anyone asking for your Social Security Number and other private financial information so they can do a "scholarship search" – what they might really want is to get a credit card in your name, then use it to get cash advances.
- Anyone selling life insurance with the promise of the policy's dividends financing college. Some of these deals are legitimate, but many times the insurance is real but the dividends won't buy meals, much less the cost of a college education.
- Anyone who wants your parents to sign a contract for "education counseling" – the monthly or weekly fees can add up to thousands of dollars.
- Companies that offer "free" loans or scholarships – but charge you a fee.
- Companies inviting the public to a "Free Financial Aid Night" but charging you and your parents for help completing the FAFSA. The Federal Student Aid Information Center will help you at no cost (call them at 800.433.3243 or visit [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov)).
- Companies who guarantee finding you money for college – but charge you as much as \$1,000 for doing so.

Remember, the same services offered by frauds with official-sounding names for a fee can be found for free on the Internet, through your high school counselor, or your college's financial aid office.

*If you're suspicious of anyone approaching you about education financing, or if you just want more information about scams, contact your state's Better Business Bureau or Attorney General's Office.*

## Adding to your college vocabulary

The following terms are important to the process of applying for, receiving, and eventually repaying loans. Contact your school's financial aid office for more information about any topic. You'll also find our Web site a valuable resource at [oftocollege.info](http://oftocollege.info), or call 800.552.3006.

**Award Letter** This official document is issued by the financial aid office. It lists all of the amounts, sources, and types of aid in your financial aid package. The Award Letter also includes the terms and conditions for the financial aid. Some schools call the Award Letter a "Financial Aid Notification" (FAN).

**Capitalization** The process by which interest is added to the principal loan amount if you choose not to make interest payments while in school (or in forbearance). This process adds to the amount that must be repaid and can increase your monthly payment amount.

**Cost of Attendance (COA)** The cost involved to attend school, including tuition and fees, books, supplies, room and board, transportation, and personal and miscellaneous expenses. The COA is determined by the school using federal guidelines.

**Default** The status of a loan when payment is 270 days (9 months) late. If this happens, the lender can declare the entire amount owed – including interest – as immediately due and payable. Defaults are reported to credit bureaus and can stay on your credit record for seven years. If you have defaulted on a federal student loan, you may not be eligible to receive any additional federal financial aid.

**Default Fee** The fee charged by the guarantee agency and deducted from loan proceeds prior to disbursement. This fee helps offset the administrative costs of FFELP.

**Deferment** The option to postpone repayment for a period of time, under certain conditions, with permission from the lender.

**Delinquency** The status of a loan when payment is late (usually 30 days). Delinquencies are reported to the credit bureaus.

**Disbursement** The payment of loan funds to the school by the lender.

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC)** The Expected Family Contribution is the amount that a dependent student and parents, or independent student and spouse, are expected to contribute toward the Cost of Attendance. This amount is calculated based on the financial information provided on the FAFSA.

**Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP)** These loans are made by lenders and are insured by the federal government. This program includes Stafford Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized) and PLUS Loans.

**Financial Aid Package** A combination of scholarships, grants, work-study, loans, etc. to help meet a student's financial need given limited resources and institutional constraints that vary from school to school. Note that scholarships and grants generally do not have to be repaid; loans must be repaid.

**Financial Need** The difference between the student's Cost of Attendance (COA) and the Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** This is the application that a student must file to apply for financial aid. The FAFSA is printed and distributed free of charge by the U.S. Department of Education. It is also available online at [fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov).

**Grace Period** A feature of Federal Stafford Loans that gives you six months after you leave school or drop below half-time status before you must start making monthly payments on your loan. If you choose to let the interest on your Unsubsidized Stafford Loan accrue, the interest and principal payments will begin at the end of your grace period. (The grace period on a Perkins Loan is nine months.)

**Guarantor or Guarantee Agency** The institution that ensures eligibility for a particular federal loan program and provides the insurance for those loans. If a borrower defaults on a loan, the guarantee agency pays the lender the amount owed and then collects the balance directly from the borrower.

**Interest or Interest Rate** The fee that is charged on an annual basis in exchange for lending the money. The interest rate, usually expressed as a percentage of the loan amount, may stay the same for the term of the loan (fixed rate) or it may change periodically (variable rate).

**Lender** The institution that provides the funds for the loan.

**Master Promissory Note (MPN)** The legal document you sign when you enter into an agreement with a lender for a Stafford or PLUS Loan. This document explains the terms and conditions of your loan, and it is good for 10 years from the date you sign it. This means you may not have to sign a new application or promissory note for additional loans from the same lender. You will, however, have the chance to review, reduce, or decline the loan amount on subsequent loans.

**Need Analysis** A process that uses the student's household and financial information (derived from the FAFSA) to calculate the Expected Family Contribution.

**Origination Fee** The fee charged by the federal government and deducted from loan proceeds prior to disbursement. This fee helps offset the administrative costs of FFELP.

**Principal** The original amount borrowed or the amount outstanding at any time. Interest is charged on this amount.

**Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)** The standards of academic progress required by the Higher Education Act in order to receive federal student financial aid. These standards are determined by the school.

**Student Aid Report (SAR)** This report generated from the need analysis shows the student's Expected Family Contribution (EFC), and his or her eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant.

# College-Bound Calendar

## A step-by-step guide to preparing for school.

If you're pretty sure you want to go to college (or even just slightly sure), there are certain things you'll have to do while you're still in high school. There are tests to take, colleges to check out, and forms you'll have to submit at certain times. You might want to tear this section out and post it so you can keep track of what to do.

### FRESHMAN YEAR

*Okay, you just got to high school. Believe it or not, there are some things you can do to start getting ready for college now.*

- Meet with your guidance counselor to talk about what areas interest you, and figure out a four-year plan for courses that will help you get into college.
- Join clubs, sports, and other activities. You'll learn things you can't learn in the classroom. Plus it looks good on college applications. (Don't worry – you won't need to fill anything out until later.)
- STUDY. Every grade counts.

### SOPHOMORE YEAR

*The list gets a little longer this year.*

- Get with your guidance counselor to review your four-year schedule (which is a three-year schedule now). Make sure you're still on track for college admission.
- Contact your guidance counselor to register for the PSAT. Take the PSAT in October; it'll be good practice for taking the SAT next year.
- Work on your grades to keep them as high as possible.
- Get as involved as you can in extracurricular activities.
- Talk with older students about their plans for college. What schools are they looking at and why? Talk to college students, too, and find out what helped them the most as they prepared in high school.

### JUNIOR YEAR

*It's time to get really serious about your college plans.*

#### September

- Sign up to take the PSAT, even if you already took it in your sophomore year. The scores on your PSATs could make a difference when you apply for scholarships.
- Check in with your guidance counselor to review your class schedule.

#### October

- Sharpen up those No. 2 pencils and take the PSAT.
- It's time to start looking at colleges. Check out the Web sites of your favorite schools. Ask your guidance counselor about different majors and what schools have the best programs in those majors.
- Make a target school list. Write to these schools and ask for their admission and financial aid information, or get that information on the schools' Web sites. Share this information with your parents or guardians.

- If you think you'll be playing sports in college, visit the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) at [ncaa.org](http://ncaa.org) for a free copy of the *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*. It will give you a good idea of what you'll need to do and what you can expect.

- Ask your guidance counselor for a list of visiting college recruiters. Meet with as many as you'd like.

- Go to college fairs and, if you can, start visiting campuses.

#### November

- Get the academic requirements and SAT I, SAT II and/or ACT test requirements for your target schools.

#### January

- Sign up for the SAT I and II and/or ACT.
- If you're pretty sure you know what college you want to go to, talk to your guidance counselor about early decision. "Early decision" means you send in your application early (usually in November of your senior year) and you get an answer early (typically December.) BUT – some colleges have restrictions on applying early; check with your guidance counselor before you do anything.

#### March

- Contact your target schools and get information on the Cost of Attendance and deadlines for application.
- Start looking for scholarships and grants.
- Make a schedule of application deadlines.

#### April

- Take the SAT I and II and/or ACT.

#### Summer

- If possible, visit your target schools.
- Talk to as many people as you can about what they do for a living. Ask them for the pros and cons of their jobs. And try to find out how college prepared them for the working world.

### SENIOR YEAR

*It's going to be a great year – but a busy one – when it comes to applying for college.*

#### September

- It's time to make some important choices. Make a list of your top target schools, including one "reach" school and one safety school.
- Keep looking for scholarships!
- Schedule campus visits by calling the admissions offices of your target schools.
- Meet with recruiters who are visiting from your target schools.
- Meet with your guidance counselor to review admissions requirements for your colleges and compare to where you are on grades and test scores.
- If you're not happy with your scores, register to take your SATs and/or ACT again.

- Decide if you want to apply for early decision at your top-choice school. If you do, you'll need to find out the procedures from the college.

#### October

- Begin completing your enrollment paperwork.
- Be sure you have financial aid information from your target colleges.
- Mark your calendar to show deadlines for financial aid and college applications.
- Take your SATs or ACT again if you want to try to get a higher score.
- Go to as many college fairs and financial aid information nights as you can.
- If you haven't done so, visit your target schools.
- Have at least two teachers and two extracurricular advisors write recommendations for you.

#### November

- If you want to try for early decision, send your applications in this month.
- Be sure your references are working on their letters of recommendation for you.
- Finish all of your enrollment and scholarship applications and have someone review them to make sure you haven't left anything out.

#### December

- Get a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from your guidance counselor, college financial aid office, or on the Web at [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov).
- Ask your parents to review the FAFSA with you and start pulling their financial information together to complete the form.
- DO NOT SUBMIT THE FAFSA UNTIL AFTER JANUARY 1st!

#### January

- Some local colleges may have workshops on FAFSA applications. Try to attend one.
- Submit your FAFSA as soon as possible, after January 1st. Don't forget to keep a copy for your records.

#### February

- Those enrollment and financial aid deadlines are getting close! Be sure to keep track of them.
- Start applying to schools BEFORE the deadlines, and make sure you keep copies of all applications.
- Submit your FAFSA no later than February 15th! Be sure to keep a copy for your records.
- Ask your high school to send your first-term transcripts to your target schools.

#### March

- If you need to, sign up to take Advanced Placement tests.

- Watch your mailbox for requests for information from college admissions and financial aid offices. Respond ASAP!
- Watch for your Student Aid Report (SAR), too. Review it carefully and make any necessary changes. If changes are needed, sign it, make a copy for your records, and send it back to the Department of Education.

#### April

- MAKE YOUR FINAL DECISION ON A COLLEGE. Notify their admissions office. And if you've been wait-listed, contact the admissions office to see if there's anything else you can do.
- If you applied to several schools, contact the others to tell them you're going to school elsewhere.
- Review the financial aid package from your future college.

#### May

- If the amount in your financial aid package doesn't meet all of your needs, find out more about private loan options from SunTrust. These loans can help you fill that gap between your financial aid award and the actual cost of attending college.
- You'll most likely need to pay required deposit(s) for enrollment and room and board.
- Take any Advanced Placement exams your college recommends.

#### June

- Ask your guidance counselor to send your final transcript to your college.
- Call the admissions and/or financial aid office to be sure they have all the information they need.

#### Summer

- Be sure all of your loan applications are complete and submitted.
- Be sure all of your deposits are up to date.
- PACK!
- Go to any orientation programs at your college.
- Go to the financial aid office when you arrive on campus to make sure everything is in order.
- Pre-register for classes.

It's also a good idea to have extra cash when you arrive at school in case your financial aid has not been established in time. That way, expenses for food, parking, and other fees are covered while the financial aid office processes your paperwork.

Otherwise that's it. You've made it. Go ahead and give yourself a big pat on the back. You're about to embark on one of the most exciting times of your life. If you have any questions about financial aid, contact your school's financial aid office, call SunTrust at 800.552.3006, or visit us online at [oftocollege.info](http://oftocollege.info).

**Congratulations... you did it! Oh, just one more thing. Don't forget to write home!**



800.552.3006  
oftocollege.info

To learn about other SunTrust education loan products and services, visit our Web site at [suntrusteducation.com](http://suntrusteducation.com).

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