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7 Options if You Didn't Receive Enough Financial Aid

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If you did not receive enough financial aid to cover your school expenses, you have seven ways to fill the gap.

1

Apply for Scholarships

Scholarships are usually merit-based and do not have to be repaid. The key is being prepared, because scholarships have deadlines and may require time to write essays. So get organized and regularly [search and apply for scholarships](#).

Ask your school's financial aid office or your academic advisor about school-specific or departmental (major-specific) scholarships. You should also look for local scholarships from where you live or graduated from high school. Scholarships may be offered by

- community organizations,
- religious organizations,
- fraternal organizations, and
- businesses in your community or that employ your parent(s).

Look for scholarship resources that are available from [your state government or from statewide organizations](#) with which you may have been involved. Research companies in your state that are related to your planned field of study.

National scholarships can be more competitive, but don't let that keep you from applying. Prioritize local applications first.

Just be careful. With scholarship opportunities, it's wise to be cautious of [student aid scams](#). If you are ever concerned about the legitimacy of a scholarship opportunity, contact your school's financial aid office.

Prioritize local applications first and make sure you meet all deadlines.

you through a paycheck. So if you still owe an amount to your school, you need to take those funds back to the school to pay your bill.

If you were not awarded work-study funds, most schools have other part-time, on-campus positions that can help pay for school. Working part-time on campus can be beneficial to your educational experience, as long as you can find a healthy balance between your school and work. Ask your financial aid office or career services office how to apply for on-campus positions.

3 Tuition Payment Plans

Your school's billing office (sometimes referred to as the bursar's office, cashier's office, or student accounts office) may have payment plans available to help you spread the remaining costs over several payments throughout a semester. The payment plan can help you budget the payments rather than paying in one lump sum, possibly helping you avoid costly late fees.

4 Request a Reevaluation of Your Circumstances

Sometimes a family's finances are not accurately reflected on the FAFSA[®] form because of changes that have occurred, such as job loss/reduction, divorce or separation, or other [special circumstances](#). This may be a consideration now that you can file the FAFSA[®] form early with tax information that is two years old by the time enrollment begins.

Schools are not required to consider special circumstances, but those that do have a process, called [professional judgement](#). Through this process, you can petition for a reevaluation of the information on your FAFSA[®] form. This process will likely require you to submit additional documentation to your school's financial aid office. If warranted, the financial aid office can then recalculate your eligibility, possibly resulting in a change to your financial aid offer.

5 Request Additional Federal Student Loans

student loans. Just remember to borrow only what you need to pay your educational expenses.

If you are a dependent student and still need more money, your parent can apply for a **Federal Direct PLUS Loan**. Most schools use our online application, but others may have their own application. The PLUS loan application process does include a credit check. **If your parent is not approved**, he or she may still be able to receive a Direct PLUS Loan by **obtaining an endorser** (cosigner) or documenting extenuating circumstances. If a parent borrower is unable to secure a PLUS loan, the student may be eligible for additional unsubsidized student loans of up to \$5,000, depending upon his or her year in school.

6 School-Based Loans, Advances, or Emergency Aid

Sometimes you may have college-related costs, such as housing costs or other living expenses, before your financial aid is disbursed. Your school may offer an option to advance your financial aid, offer a school-based loan program, or have an emergency aid procedure.

Several schools now offer emergency aid opportunities if you experience unexpected expenses or challenges that are making it difficult for you to complete the semester. Ask your financial aid office if they offer these options and always make sure you are aware of the terms and conditions (such as interest rates or repayment terms) of your agreement.

7 Private or Alternative Loans

Some private financial institutions offer education loans that do not require the FAFSA® form. While we recommend federal aid first, we realize it does not always cover the cost, especially for more expensive schools. Private loans will almost always require a cosigner and may have higher fees or interest rates depending on your credit. Ask your financial aid office if they have a list of lenders for you to consider. If your school does not maintain such a list, you can search for lenders on your own.

Compare products before making your choice: look at interest rates, fees, repayment terms, creditworthiness requirements, satisfactory academic progress requirements, etc. Students

Before going out on your own and making any final decisions on how to fill the gap between your aid and your expenses, we recommend that you meet with a representative in your financial aid office to determine what campus resources might be available. You might still have time to change some of your choices before the semester begins: Can you change the type of meal plan you chose? The type of housing? The number of classes in which you are enrolled? Check with campus officials to see if you still have time to select a different, more affordable option.

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