



50 Student Loan Tips

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- 1. Meet with your financial aid or guidance counselor** to get a better understanding of the student loan process.
- 2. Do not assume that you will not qualify for financial aid** - there are many options available. (Some loans such as unsubsidized Stafford Loans and PLUS Loans are granted regardless of need.)
- 3. Start planning early!** You can fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**) (after January 1st) even before you graduate from high school. If you have graduated already, start it ASAP!
- 4. Make sure that the FAFSA form you are filling out is the correct form** for the school year in which you are seeking financial aid for.
- 5. Have all income, asset, tax information, etc. information available and ready to go** before starting to fill out the FAFSA form.
- 6. Include your parents or guardians in on the whole process** to help you with any questions that you might have about your expected family contribution (EFC), income, etc.
- 7. If filling out a paper copy of the FAFSA form, make a photocopy beforehand to practice on,** to avoid making any mistakes on the original.
- 8. Consider completing the FAFSA form on the web at www.fafsa.ed.gov.**
- 9. Always read the instructions before starting to fill out the FAFSA form, and follow them exactly.**
- 10. Make sure that your FAFSA form is filled out completely and accurately** to avoid delays.
- 11. Be honest and precise when filling out your FAFSA** – do not lie about incomes, etc.
- 12. Do not leave any spaces on your FAFSA form blank.** Put a zero in the space instead.
- 13. Do your research** – not all loans are created equal!
- 14. Shop around!** Compare lenders and see who will give you the best deal.



- 15. Look for a lender who will offer a variety of flexible programs to choose from.**
- 16. Look for a loan that does not have prepayment penalties** – paying all or part of your loan off early will save on interest!
- 17. Look for a lender who will guide you through the student loan process and answer any questions that you might have.**
- 18. Educate yourself** on the types of loans and see which one fits your needs the best.
- 19. Understand the benefits and differences between federal loans and private loans.**
- 20. Understand that private loans require a credit check.**
- 21. Consider using a co-signer on private loans.**
- 22. Understand the difference between subsidized federal loans and unsubsidized federal loans.**
- 23. Always read the fine print on your loans**, so that you know exactly what terms you are agreeing to.
- 24. Do not borrow more than is necessary** – remember that you will eventually be paying this money back
- 25. Sign and return all award letters and/or Master Promissory Notes ASAP!**
- 26. If you are not satisfied with the amount of financial aid you receive, negotiate with your school's financial aid officers, or your lenders.**
- 27. Find out about forgiveness options.** Some fields of study offer to compensate part or all of your loans if you will work in that field for a number of years.
- 28. Watch your mail for important information regarding your loan** before, during and after your schooling.
- 29. Pay interest on unsubsidized loans while you are still in school**, if possible.
- 30. Maintain half-time student status.** This will keep your loans in deferment, meaning that you will not have to pay the monthly payment yet. If you do drop below a half-time status, you will enter the repayment period of the loan.



- 31. Stay within your budget to avoid using all of your loan money too soon.**
- 32. Use student loans only for educational purposes.** Using this money for other reasons is fraudulent and a criminal offense.
- 33. If you are filing taxes, meet with your CPA to discuss your options for deductions regarding your financial aid.**
- 34. Attend all of the required Entrance and Exit Loan Counseling Sessions.** This will give you important information pertaining to your loan.
- 35. Make your lender aware of any name or address changes** to avoid any unnecessary problems.
- 36. Consolidate your loans** – this could save you thousands of dollars.
- 37. Consolidate your loans while you are still in your grace period!** This will allow you to lock-in at a lower rate than after your grace period is over.
- 38. Look for a company to consolidate with who will offer the best rates and incentives.**
- 39. Look for a company to consolidate with who will guide you through the process and answer any questions that you might have.**
- 40. Consolidate with a company who will offer different payment plans and options that will accommodate you and your income.**
- 41. Take advantage of borrower benefits.** *Law School Loans* offers a borrower benefit of saving .25% off of your interest rate by paying with auto-debit, as well as an additional 1% rate deduction after 36 consecutive payments.
- 42. Create a realistic budget to help with paying your monthly loan payments.**
- 43. Stay organized!** Keep copies of your applications and other forms on file.
- 44. Make your monthly payments on time!** Failing to do so can lead to default.
- 45. Make your monthly payments, regardless of whether or not you receive a bill.** You are obligated to make the payments each month, even if you do not receive a reminder.
- 46. If you are unable to make your payments, contact your lender immediately.** There are deferment or forbearance options that could temporarily postpone your monthly payments.



47. **If you are granted forbearance, do not drag it out longer than necessary.** The interest that accrues while you are in forbearance will be added to your loan balance.
48. **If forbearance is necessary, consider it only for your federal loans, and continue making the monthly payments on your private loans.** Private loans tend to have a higher interest rate, so this will save you money in the long run.
49. **Round your monthly payments up.** Paying a little extra each month, can save you a lot of money in the long run.
50. **Stay informed about your loans.** Always be aware of the balance, interest rates, etc.