



# senior

## Financial Aid Checklist



### September

- Talk to your high school counselor about your college plans and money needs. Ask about scholarships offered by local organizations and businesses.
- Check out other ways to pay for college at [www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org), [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov) and [www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov).
- Keep a calendar of important deadlines for college admission and financial aid.
- Get started filling out forms and writing essays for college admissions and scholarship applications.
- Look into programs that let you earn money for college for volunteer service, including AmeriCorps ([www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov)), California Volunteers ([www.californiavolunteers.org](http://www.californiavolunteers.org)) and the California Conservation Corps ([www.ccc.ca.gov](http://www.ccc.ca.gov)).
- Sign up for the SAT ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)) or ACT ([www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)) in the fall, if you haven't taken them already.
- Make sure you have a Social Security number. You need one to apply for most financial aid.
- Check out colleges on the Web, starting with [www.californiacolleges.edu](http://www.californiacolleges.edu) and [www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](http://www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator). Meet with college representatives who may visit your school.
- Ask your teachers, counselors, employers, friends, neighbors and family for letters of recommendation.
- Make sure you have an e-mail address that's appropriate for corresponding with colleges, lenders and employers.
- Complete FAFSA4caster before early December to get a jump on the FAFSA on the Web. You'll receive a federal PIN (personal identification number) and shorten the time it takes you to complete the online FAFSA in January. You'll find it at [www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov).

### October

- Ask if your school will submit your verified Cal Grant GPA to the California Student Aid Commission or if you'll need to submit it using the paper Cal Grant GPA Verification Form. You must submit both the FAFSA and your verified GPA by March 2 to apply for a Cal Grant.
- Make sure you pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). You must pass it to qualify for a Cal Grant.

- Request any additional financial aid applications your college or financial aid program may require.
- Register for the College Board's PROFILE application at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) if you're applying to a private college that requires it.
- Keep up your grades.
- Visit your top college choices or take a virtual tour online.

### November

- Apply for your federal PIN at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov) ahead of time so you can e-sign the FAFSA on the Web for faster processing.
- Complete the FAFSA on the Web Worksheet, which you'll find at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) or your school if you didn't complete FAFSA4caster earlier. That way, you'll have all your information in front of you when the FAFSA becomes available January 1.
- Start applying for private scholarships. Some may have very early deadlines.

### December

- Remind your parents to save their year-end payroll stubs. The FAFSA asks for information about your parents' finances.
- Continue to apply for private scholarships.

### January

- Complete and submit the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) as soon as possible, starting January 1 (or download the PDF version at [www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov)). Use estimates if you don't have completed tax returns. Provide the required e-signatures and an e-mail address for faster processing.
- Be sure you or your school submits your verified Cal Grant GPA. Remember, you must submit two forms by the March 2 deadline to apply for a Cal Grant: the FAFSA and your verified Cal Grant GPA.
- Attend a California Cash for College workshop in January or February for free help completing the FAFSA and other forms—and to apply for an extra \$1,000 scholarship. For dates and locations, go to [www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org).
- Be sure to meet all financial aid deadlines. Some may be earlier than the March 2 Cal Grant deadline.
- Keep a copy of everything you submit.

### February

- Follow up with your high school to make sure your Cal Grant GPA was electronically submitted to the Commission, if that is your school's procedure, or to get your GPA certified using the paper Cal Grant GPA Verification Form if your school doesn't submit GPAs electronically.
- Track your application online using WebGrants for Students at [www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org).
- Review your Student Aid Report and make corrections, if necessary. If you don't receive your report within three weeks of submitting your FAFSA, call toll free 800.433.3243.
- Be sure you or your parents complete your tax returns so you can update your Student Aid Report, if necessary.
- Look into Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams for college credit held in the spring at participating high schools.

### March

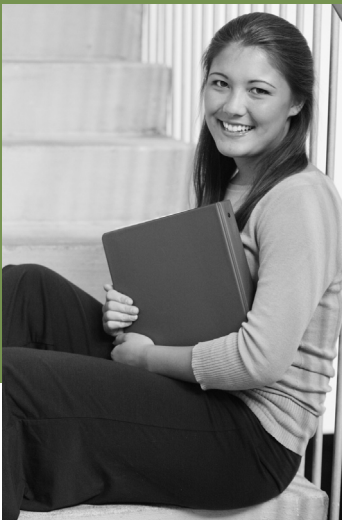
- If you receive a California Aid Report or a corrections letter regarding your eligibility for a Cal Grant, review it carefully and respond, if necessary.

### April

- Watch for college acceptance letters and financial aid offers.
- Evaluate all financial aid offers carefully. Ask questions!
- Consider grants, work-study and other aid you don't have to repay before accepting a student loan.
- Decide on a college and send in all forms or deposits by the deadline (May 1 for most colleges).
- Let your college know the financial aid awards you're accepting and the ones you're declining.
- If you applied for a Cal Grant (you submitted the FAFSA and your verified Cal Grant GPA by March 2) and have not received a letter regarding your application by April 30, e-mail [studentsupport@csac.ca.gov](mailto:studentsupport@csac.ca.gov) or call toll free 888.224.7268.

### May

- Look for a summer job, or consider summer school or an internship.
- Arrange for housing plans.
- If you missed the March 2 Cal Grant deadline, complete the FAFSA and contact your financial aid office to learn about other financial aid opportunities.



# junior

## Financial Aid Checklist



### Fall

- Explore ways to pay for college, starting with [www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org), [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov), [www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov) and [www.going2college.org](http://www.going2college.org).
- Ask teachers, counselors and coaches for leads on private scholarships and search the Web, starting with [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com).
- Use FAFSA4caster to get an estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid—and shorten the time it will take you to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in your senior year when you apply for financial aid. Visit [www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov).
- Check out colleges or technical and career programs at [www.californiacolleges.edu](http://www.californiacolleges.edu) and [www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](http://www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator). Start a college folder with the information you collect.
- Register for the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test at your high school. You'll get a chance to practice for the SAT and enter into a competition for a merit scholarship.
- Open up a free e-mail account, if you don't have one already, and make sure your e-mail address is appropriate for corresponding with colleges, lenders and employers.
- Ask your counselor if any college representatives will be visiting your school or whether a college fair is planned for your community.
- Review your class schedule with your counselor to make sure you're on track with your goals.
- Begin thinking about counselors, teachers, friends or family members to ask to write letters of recommendation for your college admissions and scholarship applications.

- Get involved in activities at your school or in the community. A number of colleges look at grades as well as outside interests when determining which students to admit. Keep a record in an "activities" folder for future reference.
- Make sure you pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). You must pass the exam to qualify for a Cal Grant.

### Winter

- Register and begin studying for your college entrance exams—the SAT Reasoning or Subject tests ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)), the ACT ([www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)) or other exam. You'll find practice questions at these Web sites.
- Consider taking any Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or SAT Subject exams in the spring while the information is fresh.
- Attend your high school's financial aid night. It's not too early to learn about your options.
- Continue to explore colleges or technical and career programs. Put together a list of 10 colleges that interest you.

### Spring

- Take the SAT, ACT or other college entrance exam.

- Keep up your grades. Your junior-year grades in particular are important for college admission.
- Talk to your parents about visiting your top college choices. If possible, arrange for an interview or an overnight stay. Also, find out if a local organization sponsors a college tour during spring break.
- If you plan to participate in college sports, you may need to register at the beginning of your junior year with the clearinghouse of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, depending on your sport, division or college.
- Look into summer programs, workshops, internships or jobs.
- Continue to explore colleges and financial aid opportunities.
- Look into programs that let you earn money for college for volunteer service, including AmeriCorps ([www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov)), California Volunteers ([www.californiavolunteers.org](http://www.californiavolunteers.org)) and the California Conservation Corps ([www.ccc.ca.gov](http://www.ccc.ca.gov)).
- Explore veterans ([www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)) and military service ([www.myfuture.com](http://www.myfuture.com)) education benefits.

### Important Numbers and Web Sites

**California Student Aid Commission**  
[www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org)  
[www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov)  
888.CA.GRANT (888.224.7268)

**California Cash for College Workshops**  
[www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org)

**Federal Student Aid**  
FAFSA4caster  
PDF version of the FAFSA  
[www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov)  
800.4FED.AID (800.433.3243)

**The FAFSA**  
[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)