u·aspire

CALIFORNIA FINANCIAL AID CHECKLIST

Follow these steps in your senior year of high school to apply for financial aid. Deadlines vary so complete the steps when you can, even if it's passed the suggested timing.

PREPARE

SEPTEMBER

- [ ] **Make college list**

  Work with your advisor/counselor to identify and apply to at least one financially safer school – a college that you're likely to be accepted to and able to afford.

- [ ] **Create FSA ID**

  Username and password that all students and their parent(s) must create to start the FAFSA.

  - Watch How to Create a StudentAid.gov Account
  - Create an FSA ID at studentaid.gov

APPLY

OCTOBER – DECEMBER

- [ ] **Submit FAFSA or California Dream Act Application**

  Available by October 1st 2026, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is required by all colleges, universities, and technical programs for eligible students to apply for financial aid. The California Dream Act Application (CADAA) allows undocumented students who qualify for AB540 to apply for CA state and institutional aid.

  - Watch FAFSA Overview
  - Collect information needed using the FAFSA Checklist
  - Fill out and submit your FAFSA at fafsa.gov
  - Fill out and submit your CADAA at dream.csac.ca.gov

- [ ] **Submit CSS Profile**

  Required by some private colleges for students to apply for financial aid directly from the college.

  - Visit cssprofile.collegeboard.org to see if your college(s) require the CSS Profile and to submit the application
  - Collect information needed using the CSS Profile Checklist

FOLLOW UP

JANUARY – FEBRUARY

Review FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS) or CalSAR

The FSS becomes available shortly after you submit the FAFSA. It summarizes the information you reported on it, includes your Student Aid Index (SAI), and flags issues with your FAFSA that must be resolved. If you submit the CADAA instead, review your CalSAR.

Complete verification

If you're selected for verification, a process colleges use to ensure the information reported on your FAFSA is correct, you're required to provide the requested documents in order to receive financial aid.

- See our Verification Handout

Manage state aid

Create an account on WebGrants to manage your California state aid. Ensure that your GPA has been submitted by your school by the deadline.

- Create your account at mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov

DECIDE

MARCH – MAY

Scan or go to uaspire.org/Checklist to view checklist online

Review financial aid offers

Aid offers show you the amount of financial aid you will receive if you attend a specific college. Compare all offers before deciding where to attend college.

- Use the College Cost Calculator to compare your offers and estimate your indirect costs

Pay tuition deposit

A non-refundable down payment required by most 4-year colleges and universities to hold your spot at the college, due by May 1.

- See our Tuition Deposit Handout for more information

Finalize state aid

Complete remaining tasks in WebGrants like confirming your college. If you completed a CADAA, submit the CA Nonresident Tuition Exemption Form to your intended college.

- Learn more about Nonresident Tuition Exemption