

Manage your college money

How to take action on choosing a bank account and avoiding fees

ACTION GUIDE

1 Choose an account as soon as possible

Try to find an account before you start school – researching now can save you money later.

THINGS TO TRY

- Shop around. Don't feel limited to only the banks or credit unions with ATMs near campus.
- Consider accounts with services like remote check deposits, mobile apps, and online bill-pay.

Do I have to sign up for the bank at my school?

No. Schools cannot require you to use their bank, so shop around.

2 Avoid paying unexpected fees

Knowing if and when fees will be charged could save you hundreds of dollars in fees each year.

THINGS TO TRY

- Ask questions. Does your bank charge monthly fees? What about out-of-network ATM fees, fees to use your debit card, or fees for services like online bill-pay?
- Dig deeper when accounts are marketed as “free” or “easy” – very few accounts charge no fees at all.

What are overdraft fees?

When you spend more money than you have in your account, your bank will likely charge you an overdraft fee, and a \$4 cup of coffee can end up costing you \$35 or more. Be careful – these fees add up quickly.

3 Sign up for direct deposit as soon as possible

If you are expecting money from your financial aid office, you'll often get it faster this way – it can be weeks before the school gets to writing you a paper check.

THINGS TO TRY

- Once you have a bank account, sign up for direct deposit with your school before classes start.

What is a financial aid disbursement?

Your financial aid disbursement is the money left after your school takes out of the cost of tuition, fees, and any on-campus living expenses from your total financial aid award. You normally have several options for how you get that money, including direct deposit to a bank account, to a card that might also double as your student ID, by check, or cash.