

# Top 10 Student Financial Aid Tip\$

From the  
Alabama Student  
Loan Program-  
KHEAA



What can you do to increase your chances of receiving student aid to help pay higher education expenses? Here are some tips from the Alabama Student Loan Program–KHEAA to help you get started.



- 10 Complete tax forms early.** You must use information from the federal income tax form to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Make sure to keep a copy of your parents' completed form and keep a copy of yours, too, if you file the form.
- 9 Submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1 to obtain aid for the fall semester.** The FAFSA is used to apply for financial aid from several major state and institutional programs as well as federal programs. It is available from high school counselors, financial aid officers of higher education institutions, and KHEAA. If you complete and return the FAFSA early, you'll have the best chance of receiving aid for which you may qualify. You should also contact the school's financial aid office to determine if you need to complete additional application forms.
- 8 Make good grades in high school.** By doing so, you will be better prepared for college and can earn money for college or technical training. The better you do in high school, the more likely you will qualify for scholarships to help pay your higher education expenses.
- 7 Talk with the college financial aid administrator.** Ask about aid programs that are available through the school—institutional aid.
- 6 Search for free information about student financial aid.**
  - Go to your high school or public library and look for books with sources of student aid.
  - Consult *Getting In*, a KHEAA publication widely used by high school seniors, parents, and guidance counselors in locating information about postsecondary school opportunities in Alabama, including facts on admissions, costs, financial aid, and academic programs. Free copies of *Getting In* are sent to high school guidance counselors for all seniors and to public and high school libraries. *Getting In* is also available on KHEAA's Web site [www.kheaa.com](http://www.kheaa.com).

- Visit Web sites that offer free information about higher education, financial aid, and career planning. Several sites are listed in KHEAA's *Surf the Net* pamphlet, which is also available from the Alabama Student Loan Program-KHEAA. KHEAA is not responsible for the quality of any Internet site and does not recommend the use of one site over another. Web sites are currently unregulated by any authorizing agency. Particular caution should be exercised in using scholarship sites. Any site or company requiring fee-for-search services is probably best left unused.
- Read *Funding Your Education*, a U.S. Department of Education (USDE) handbook containing valuable information about student financial assistance. Copies should be available at public libraries and counselor offices. Additional details may be obtained by calling USDE's Federal Student Aid Information Center at (800) 433-3243 or visiting [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov).
- Watch newspapers for scholarships offered through local community service organizations, businesses, clubs, unions, churches, fraternal groups, etc., and contact them for more information.
- Write to organizations connected with your field of interest (such as the American Medical Association or American Bar Association) which may have financial aid available. These organizations are listed in directories of associations available in public libraries.
- Check with community organizations and civic groups such as the American Legion, YMCA, 4-H Club, Kiwanis, Jaycees, Chamber of Commerce, and Girl or Boy Scouts. Foundations, religious organizations, fraternities or sororities, and town or city clubs are some other possible sources of aid.

**5 Learn about low-interest loans.** You should first seek aid that does not have to be repaid. However, most financial aid packages prepared by schools contain student loans. KHEAA administers the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP), which includes Federal Subsidized and Unsubsidized Stafford Loans and Federal PLUS Loans. These loans have low interest rates and long-term repayment options. Depending on the school you choose, Federal Direct Loans with the same eligibility and award criteria as FFELP may be available; check with the financial aid office.

**4 Apply, apply, apply.** By applying for several types of aid, you increase your chances of receiving enough to pay your school costs.

**3 Read and follow directions.** Filling out an application properly and neatly is important. You may be disqualified for failing to complete all questions, answering them incorrectly, or missing the deadlines.

**2 Consult your guidance counselor.** This person is an excellent resource and can tell you about financial aid in general and where to look for help.

**1 Beware of scams.** Before paying a fee for financial aid information, read the information about scams on pages 29–30 in *Getting In*; talk with your high school counselor; a financial aid officer at the school you plan to attend; the Better Business Bureau in your area and the area where the firm is located; and the Office of the Attorney General, Consumer Affairs Division, Alabama State House, 11 South Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36130-0152, (334) 242-7335 or toll free (800) 392-5658. Some companies may offer money-back guarantees to students who don't receive any scholarship sources or funds, but students who are unsuccessful or not satisfied may find that refunds are difficult, if not impossible, to obtain.



## Alabama Student Loan Program

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