

What Is a Tuition Discount and How to Get One ?



Tuition discounts are one way to make college more affordable for students, as they reduce the amount a student will have to pay for school. Unlike other grants and scholarships — which are typically offered by the federal government, state governments, or third-party organizations — tuition discounts are offered by the institution itself.

How Do Tuition Discounts Work?

Although they have the same effect as other discounts, tuition discounts work a little differently than you might expect. Rather than marking down its tuition rate for a student, a college will offer institutional aid in the form of grants and scholarships to offset all or part of the published rate. This in-house financial aid essentially lowers the cost of tuition for the student in question.

Not all students will qualify for tuition discounts. If you do, your college will likely notify you in its initial acceptance letter and financial aid offer. You might also find a list of institutional aid opportunities on your college's website.

Who Qualifies for a Tuition Discount?

Tuition discounts vary from college to college. Students often qualify for a tuition discount if they fall into one or more of these categories:

Incoming freshman. Some institutional scholarships are only available for incoming freshmen at the school.

Low-income students. Many universities offer tuition discounts based on financial need.

State residents. Typically, more institutional aid is offered to residents of the state where the university is located than to out-of-state students. Some colleges also participate in exchange programs, such as the Midwest Student Exchange Program, that offer in-state rates to students from neighboring states.

University employees. University employees and their children often receive discounted

tuition, as do their children.

Civil servants. Your college may also provide institutional aid to those who work in the public sector, such as state or federal government employees — or, in some cases, their children.

Legacy students. If you attend the same college one of your parents attended, you may qualify for a legacy scholarship.

Summer students. Some universities boast lower tuition rates for classes held during the summer.

Military members. Current and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces often benefit from tuition discounts as thanks for their service.

Steps You Can Take Apply early

1. **Apply early.** Some forms of institutional aid may be limited and offered on a first-come, first-serve basis. Apply to your college of choice early to give yourself the best shot at qualifying for a tuition discount.
2. **Submit your FAFSA.** Your eligibility for certain types of institutional aid may be based on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®).
3. **Ask about tuition discounts.** Sometimes, tuition rates are negotiable — to an extent. If you have a pressing need, ask if the college can offer you any additional aid.
4. **Keep your grades up.** Some institutional aid may be merit-based, or you may need to maintain a certain GPA in order to keep receiving it.

To find out what tuition discounts are available at your college, speak to your school's financial aid office. It never hurts to ask.