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**It's true:** looking at colleges can be overwhelming, especially when you start doing the math on costs of this four-year experience. It's not cheap. And it really shouldn't be – your post-high school education is one of the most important gifts you can give yourself. But don't worry, financial help is out there. You just need to know where to look.

There are millions of dollars available for students going to college. Scholarships can turn your dream of attending a certain college into reality. With the huge number of scholarships out there, it's next to impossible not to find one that fits you. There are scholarships for left-handed people, for musicians, for athletes, for leaders, for farmers, for animal lovers, for artists – the list goes on and on.

Although many scholarship rewards are small, the number of scholarships you can apply for is limitless. This means there's an opportunity to gather a significant sum of money towards your education, and unlike loans, scholarships don't have to be paid back. It's free money that just takes a little time and effort on your part. 🙌

## Know Your Terms

Financial aid breaks down into several types:

- 💰 **Grants** are usually given based on need and – this is important! – do not require repayment.
- 💰 **Scholarships** are typically awarded based on academic achievement, skill, ability, or community service. Like grants, scholarship money does not need to be repaid.
- 💰 A **student loan** is money borrowed from a bank, the government, or educational institution that must be repaid. However, low-interest loans are available and you don't have to begin repaying the loan until after you graduate or leave school.
- 💰 **Work-study programs** enable students to earn money to offset the cost of their education.

## Did you know?

People with a college degree earn 81 percent more on average than those with only a high school diploma. Over a lifetime, the gap in earnings potential between a high school diploma and a BA is more than \$1,000,000.

Source: The College Board