

# FLEX

0909

## Off to College - First Year Sticker Shock

The beginning of a new school year is a good time to plan out the expenses which can quickly add up, especially the first-year college expenses. Consider getting advice from current students or recent graduates on the expectations of upcoming expenses and stick to a budget. The most common expenses include:

- Rent
- Transportation, if using a car: gas, insurance, parking permits.
- Textbooks and other class materials
- Decorating and furnishing your living space
- On-campus meal plans, dining out, groceries
- Joining clubs, fraternities and sororities
- And don't forget to save a little bit for extracurricular activities such as sporting events.

Consider some money saving tips such as splitting rent with roommates, buying used textbooks from friends, online or bookstores, and living on-campus to reduce the cost of transportation. Limit eating out and going to parties as that will quickly add up. Finally, look for free or 'student-discount' events on-campus or near your school, such as movie theaters and concerts.

## Saving is the New Spending

### *Track your spending.*

Write down every cent you spend for a month on food, gas, clothes, entertainment – everything. Review the list and see what you could live without or at least reduce. For example, brown-bagging once a week would save 20 percent on your lunch budget – hundreds of dollars a year.

### *Avoid "retail therapy."*

Before hitting the mall, shop your own closet for those "had-to-have" outfits still on their original hangers.

## THE POWER OF YOUR FINANCIAL FREEDOM



# Protect Your Identity!

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States today. Identity fraud affects 9.9 million Americans, according to Javelin Strategy & Research.

## Do...

1. Shred all personal and financial information before you toss it.
2. Keep personal and financial records in a secure place - where it isn't accessible for roommates or visitors to your dorm room.
3. Call the post office if you are not receiving your mail.
4. Be aware of others nearby when entering your PIN at an ATM.
5. Limit the number of credit union credit or debit cards and other personal information in your wallet or purse.
6. Report lost or stolen payment cards immediately.
7. Cancel all inactive payment card accounts.
8. If you have applied for a credit or debit card and have not received it, immediately notify your credit union.
9. Contact your credit union if your card expires and you haven't received a replacement card.
10. Sign all new payment cards upon receipt.
11. Review your payment reports annually.
12. Use unique passwords on your cards and accounts.
13. Check monthly statements for unauthorized charges.
14. If your Social Security number is being used for identification purposes (e.g., health insurance, school records), request another method of identification.

## DON'T...

15. Volunteer personal information when using your cards.
16. Give your Social Security number, payment card number, or any account details over the phone unless you have initiated the call and know the business is reputable.
17. Leave receipts at stores, ATMs or gasoline pumps.
18. Leave envelopes with payments, account information, or personal information laying around in your dorm room or apartment.
19. Store your Social Security number and/or passwords in your wallet or purse.
20. Disclose account numbers, credit or debit card numbers, or other personal financial data on any web site or online service location, unless you receive a secured authentication.



## FAST FACT

### Phishing

Phishers are high-tech thieves who use phony e-mails, with familiar logos and graphics, pretending to be a company you know and hook you into giving them your financial and personal information.

### If You Become a Victim of ID Theft...

1. Contact the three national credit bureaus to report the identity theft and request a "fraud alert."

[www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)  
[www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)  
[www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)

2. File a police report.

3. Contact the fraud departments of your creditors.

4. File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). [www.ftc.gov/idtheft](http://www.ftc.gov/idtheft)

5. Take other appropriate actions, depending on your identity theft situation. (For example, contact the Social Security Administration office to report suspected Social Security number theft; file a report with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service if your mail was stolen; etc.)