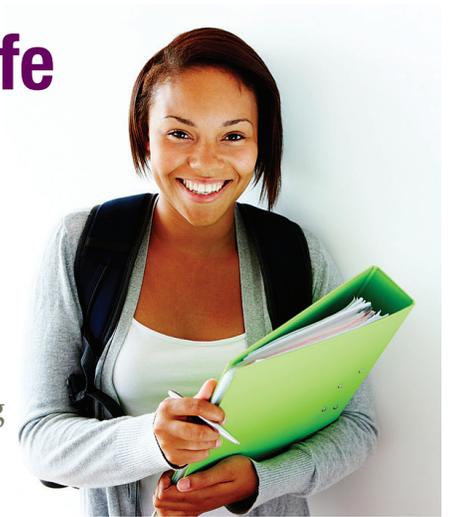


# How to Cut the Cost of College Life

## Learning to be Frugal at College

By Donna L Montaldo

Going to college is expensive even after the tuition is paid. The following tips can help college students cut back on unnecessary expenses and take more cost-effective steps to financing what they need to make life comfortable, entertaining and a good learning environment.



### Textbooks

- Search for used textbooks online or locally at used bookstores, garage sales and campus bookstores.
- Check for e-books which can be downloaded.
- Sell old textbooks to help fund current book needs.

### Clothing

- Stick to basics. Basic clothing versus trendy fashion styles do not become dated as quickly.
- Use accessories to update your basics.
- Develop your own style by shopping vintage boutiques, garage and estate sales and thrift stores.
- Learn to sew and add your own trendy spin to basics.
- Book Bags - A sturdy canvas book bag will last longer and cost less than leather.

### Furniture

Shop garage sales, thrift stores, flea markets and check with relatives who may have old furniture to get rid of. Renovating used furniture is inexpensive. Tossed out louver doors make excellent shelves and room dividers. Chairs and sofas can be updated with paint, a good staple gun, bed sheets or sale fabric to update the upholstery. Inexpensive knobs can replace dated or missing knobs and a couple of good coats of paint will refresh any wood furniture.

### Kitchen Needs

- Dishes, pans, and other kitchen supplies can be found at garage sales and your local craigslist.com.
- Keep a good inventory of cheap plastic "to go" glasses. These can be found at garage sales for under a dime.
- Shop and compare prices at your local discount stores for appliances and buy during tax-free shopping days when possible.
- Always ask if a store offers student discounts.

### General Supplies

Buddy up with friends and buy in bulk. Items such as toilet paper, personal grooming products, and basic food items can be purchased in bulk for less money than purchasing the items separately at grocery and drug stores.

### Food

- Keep a good stock of coffee, soda and snacks at home instead of purchasing them from expensive vending machines.
- Purchasing food at the student cafeteria or food court can dig deep into a budget. Pack your lunch instead and save a bundle.

- Purchase an inexpensive thermal tote to keep soda and water cold and your lunch fresh during class time.
- Make your own coffee and pour it into a thermos to take with you.
- Plan your meals carefully to avoid waste and allow for quick leftovers.
- Recycle plastic food containers and jars for food storage.
- Shop with coupons for products you enjoy.
- Buy generic food. The food is manufactured by the same companies that make the more costly brand name foods.
- Define an area for eating where you can relax and enjoy a good meal.
- Cook with friends. Split the cost and make batches of cookies, soups, spaghetti sauce and other foods which can be divided.
- Shop at local farmers markets for fresh vegetables and fruits. The prices are often far more reasonable than grocery stores located near colleges.
- Learn how to freeze food.
- Stay away from convenience stores. The mark up on items at convenience stores is sometimes double what you'll pay at the grocery or drug store.
- Avoid grabbing items located on the end of grocery store aisle end caps. Items placed in these areas make look like a good deal, but are generally higher than items found on shelves in the aisles.
- Buy meat that is expiring soon and marked down for quick sale. Either cook the meat immediately or freeze it.

## Entertainment

- Take advantage of campus facilities and events. Many campuses have pools, basketball courts, gymnastics equipment, tennis courts and weight rooms and usage fees may be included in tuition.
- Find out what is happening around the community. Free concerts, festivals and fairs, parks with hiking paths, art exhibits and museums can be free or low cost activities and often offer discounts to students if there is a charge.
- Rather than go to expensive restaurants, invite friends for a potluck dinner. If everyone brings a dish there will be plenty to eat, lots of leftovers and the cost can be manageable.
- When dining out, get to the restaurant early to take advantage of early-bird specials.
- Avoid ordering mixed drinks and opt for water instead.
- Always get a doggy bag for leftovers and pack it for lunch the next day.
- Check out local specials like happy hour buffets, free ladies hours and two for one offers. Local hotels often promote happy hour by offering free food and entertainment.
- Utilize free download sites like Ruckus Network, iLike.com, Pandora.com, to build your music collection.
- Swap books, magazines and movies with friends.

## Transportation

- Use the public transit system when possible and always check to see if student discounts apply.
- Purchase transportation tickets seasonally instead of individually.
- If commuting to college, find out about local car pool or park and ride options in the area.
- Barter with friends. If you can cook trade your talent with a friend who can change your oil.
- Avoid procrastinating on car inspections, license renewals and insurance renewal and follow the rules of the road. Tickets can be costly and are simple to avoid.