

CALIFORNIA GRANT GUIDE



APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying for financial aid can seem daunting, but by following these steps, you'll be well on your way to securing funds for college. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and California's Cal Grant program are your key to unlocking federal grants, loans, and work-study programs. Keep in mind that Cal Grants are only available for students attending colleges or universities in California. You *won't* need to repay grants or earnings from work-study, but you *will* need to repay any loans you accept. Here's how to navigate the application process:

Step 1: Complete the FAFSA Application

[The FAFSA application](#) opens every year on **October 1st**. It's crucial to apply as early as possible. You can access the application online on the FAFSA Website. For California residents seeking Cal Grants, the deadline is **March 2nd** of each calendar year, with rare exceptions. The **secondary** deadline for the Cal Grant is **September 2nd** for **students enrolled in community college only**.

The **2025–2026 FAFSA** application should be completed by anyone starting classes through Spring 2026. Those beginning after July 1, 2026 (such as Fall 2026 or later) must complete the **2026–2027 FAFSA**. Filing the correct application year is critical, as submitting the wrong one or missing the state priority deadline (March 2nd or September 2nd for California community college students) can prevent you from receiving aid.

Key Dates:

- **October 1st:** FAFSA application opens
- **March 2nd:** Cal Grant Deadline
- **September 2nd:** Secondary Cal Grant deadline

Step 2: Create a California Student Aid Commission Account

Approximately five days after submitting your FAFSA, create a student account on [the California Student Aid Commission \(CSAC\) website](#).

Step 3: GPA Submission

Check with your high school counselor to see if they submit your GPA to the student aid commission electronically or via a paper form. If electronic, find out when information will be submitted. If paper, download [this form](#) and take it to the high school counselor to have your GPA verified for the state application. The school is then required to ensure the commission receives the verification.

Step 4: Verify Receipt and GPA Information

Before the **March 2nd** or **September 2nd** deadline, check your student account from STEP TWO. This account will verify that your FAFSA was completed and processed, and the GPA information was received, what the reported GPA is, and which school submitted the information.

Step 5: Respond to College Financial Aid Office Requests

Your college's financial aid office may request additional documentation for verification purposes. Respond to these requests promptly as it will be important to receiving federal or state funding.

SUMMARY

Successfully navigating the Cal Grant application process involves meeting crucial deadlines, creating the necessary accounts, and staying proactive. By following the steps outlined in this guide, you'll increase your chances of receiving the financial aid you need to achieve your educational goals. Remember, early application and consistent follow-up are key!

Please email volunteer mentor Chris Clay at latutor2024@gmail.com for more support.

