

Your Transition to College



An Adult Learner's Guide to College

You know college is an investment in your future. Here's what you can do to ensure your investment yields the greatest return.

Prioritize

- As a non-traditional student, you may have priorities like work and family, which means adding college coursework to your schedule will require a new level of time management. You may have to let go of some activities temporarily to be successful.
- The urge to delay harder tasks is natural, but procrastination wastes valuable time. Study the more difficult subjects first.
- Eat healthy foods that will give your body and brain the fuel they need. Try using the campus fitness center and try to keep foods that will boost your energy level on hand.
- With your busy schedule, time for rest may be harder to find, but it's so important. To avoid feeling overextended, set limits to carve out time to recharge.

Organize

- Use a traditional or digital day planner and set reminders to help you stay on track.
- Keep up and avoid missing deadlines by reviewing your course syllabi carefully and often. A syllabus is an overview that outlines each course's content and requirements.
- Set midterm goals and analyze your progress along the way.
- If you're feeling anxious, don't give up. Often, you can overcome fear of failure, emotional blocks and unrealistic expectations by improving your organizational skills. Remember that it's OK to reach out to mentors and supportive loved ones when you feel overwhelmed.

Socialize

- Introduce yourself to your professors. You're not just another face in the crowd.
- Get involved on campus and seek out other students who share your interests. Connections with students of all ages will enrich your college experience.
- If you have a spouse and/or children, bring them with you to campus events. Campus visits not only help your kids understand the depth of your commitment to higher education, but also fuel their college aspirations.



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If you're an adult interested in attending or going back to college, you may be surprised to learn that you're not alone. It's projected that there will be an 11% increase in college students between the ages of 25 and 34 by 2026. ([NCES.ed.gov](https://nces.ed.gov)). Whether you want a change in career or to improve your current skill set, getting a higher education is a great investment in your future. Here are some steps you can take now as you prepare for college.

Narrow your choices. Whether you're interested in a traditional classroom setting or online courses, there are plenty of options to choose from. Many Oklahoma colleges and universities also offer degree completion programs specifically designed for adults. Check out the options and compare schools now at: [OKcollegestart.org](https://okcollegestart.org) or [NCES.ed.gov/CollegeNavigator](https://nces.ed.gov/CollegeNavigator).

Apply for Grants and Scholarships.

There are plenty of grants and scholarships available for adult learners. Visit [UCanGo2.org](https://ucango2.org) and [OKcollegestart.org](https://okcollegestart.org) to find numerous scholarship opportunities. For some great application tips and a list of free scholarship search websites, check out the Scholarship Success Guide in the publications section at [UCanGo2.org](https://ucango2.org). If you need a student loan, visit [ReadySetRepay.org](https://readyssetrepay.org) to learn how to make smart borrowing decisions and successfully repay it.

Submit your FAFSA. Apply for federal grants and loans by submitting your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Go to [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov) and apply as soon as possible after Oct. 1 for each year you plan to attend college. For help with the FAFSA or for more resources, visit [StartWithFAFSA.org](https://startwithfafsa.org).

Reach Higher. If you already have some college credit, you may qualify for the Reach Higher: FlexFinish or Reach Higher: DirectComplete programs. The FlexFinish program offers flexible enrollment and online options for working adults with some college credit. The DirectComplete program focuses on degree programs linked to workforce development needs in Oklahoma's 100 critical occupations. For more information, visit reachhigherok.org.

Q: How will I balance all of my responsibilities so I can focus on classes?

A: College can be demanding, but where there's a will, there's a way. Talk to your family regarding what college will require of you. Ask if they'd be willing to help pick up some of the slack if you find yourself strapped for time. Check with your employer to see if a flexible schedule is an option, so you can attend class and/or make time to study. Many companies now offer tuition reimbursement options for their employees attending college.

Q: What if I'm the only adult in my class?

A: More adults over the age of 25 are entering college than ever before. Many classes will have other adult learners in them. There are also other options, such as online courses.

Q: College is too expensive. How can I afford it?

A: Oklahoma colleges are some of the most affordable in the nation. Apply for scholarships and grants, and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA will determine your eligibility for grants, work programs, student loans and some scholarships. Visit with a campus financial aid officer to explore all options available to you.

Q: I haven't been in a classroom for years; what if I can't keep up with the other students?

A: Many colleges provide tutoring or technological assistance for nontraditional students. Your past and present work experience gives you a unique perspective, which is an advantage. If you ever have trouble understanding a concept, discuss it with the instructor.

Need more info?

Visit [UCanGo2.org](https://ucango2.org) or call 405.234.4239 or 866.443.7420 (toll free) for more information about planning, preparing and paying for college. "Like" us at facebook.com/ucango2 to receive regular scholarship updates.

Additional Resources

Reach Higher
reachhigherok.org

[OKcollegestart.org](https://okcollegestart.org)
[OKcollegestart.org](https://okcollegestart.org)

Ready Set Repay
[ReadySetRepay.org](https://readyssetrepay.org)

Oklahoma Money Matters
[OklahomaMoneyMatters.org](https://oklahomamoneymatters.org)

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