



Roy Cooper
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College Cash & Credit Checklist

- ✓ **Know what you owe.** Know your student loan balance, what kind of loan you have, your lender and your interest rate, and never take out more than you really need to borrow.
- ✓ **Know your options for paying off student loans.** Many have a grace period, meaning you don't have to start making payments as soon as you finish school. In some cases you may be able to defer payment or have part of your loans forgiven, for example if you take a public service job. Also consider consolidating multiple loans into one manageable payment.
- ✓ **Don't pay money upfront for help with student loan debt.** It's illegal in North Carolina for someone to charge you an advance fee for help dealing with your debts. Your lender can help you understand options for managing your student debt.
- ✓ **Check out credit cards carefully.** Compare annual interest rates (APR) and fees to find the card that's best for you. Using a credit card wisely and paying it off on time each month can help you build good credit, while overspending and missing payments will harm your credit.
- ✓ **Beware of overdraft fees.** Debit cards are convenient, but if you spend more money than is in your account, you can be hit with high fees. Check your balance regularly and compare overdraft options to find the best account for you.
- ✓ **Check your credit report.** You can get one free credit report per year from each of the three credit reporting bureaus at annualcreditreport.com. Use your free reports to check your credit every four months and report any activity that isn't yours.
- ✓ **Protect your personal information.** Don't share your Social Security Number, account numbers or other details with anyone you don't know who contacts you. Keep financial info in a safe place, even in your dorm or apartment, and shred any financial records you don't need.
- ✓ **Consider a free security freeze.** To keep criminals from opening new accounts in your name, freeze your credit for free online. Learn how at ncdoj.gov/freefreeze.
- ✓ **Use Wi-Fi wisely.** Limit activity on public Wi-Fi to surfing only, not checking your bank account or making purchases. Ask an employee to make sure you connect to the correct Wi-F network instead of falling for a copycat. Keep anti-virus software up-to-date and consider using two-step authentication for online accounts.
- ✓ **Think carefully about what you share online.** Sharing too much personal information can leave you vulnerable to hackers, scammers and other criminals. Remember that future employers and graduate schools may also consider social media activity when making hiring and admissions decisions.

Want to know more?

- For consumer tips and safety alerts: www.ncdoj.gov
- File a consumer complaint with our office at ncdoj.gov/complaint or call 1-877-5-NO-SCAM (toll-free within North Carolina)
- Follow us on Twitter at @NCAGO or like us on Facebook (NC Attorney General's Office)

Other resources

Student Loans

- www.studentloans.gov (includes a repayment calculator)
- www.studentaid.ed.gov (Federal Student Aid Office, US Department of Education)
- www.consumerfinance.gov/students (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau)
- Your school's Financial Aid Office

Credit and Debit Cards

- www.federalreserve.gov/creditcard (Federal Reserve)
- www.consumerfinance.gov/credit-cards/ Consumer Financial Protection Bureau)

Identity Theft

- www.annualcreditreport.com (free credit reports)
- www.optoutprescreen.com or 1-888-5OPT-OUT to opt out of pre-approved credit card offers)
- ncdoj.gov/Help-for-Victims/ID-Theft-Victims.aspx (steps to take if you're a victim)
- www.ftc.gov (Federal Trade Commission, includes tools to create an identity theft report)
- ncdoj.gov/freefreeze (how to place free security freezes on your credit reports)