

Dollars and Sense: FastWeb Money Tips

5 Tips for Setting Up Banking Accounts

1. Look for student accounts with low/no required balances, unlimited check writing and low/no-cost access to nearby ATMs.
2. Ask about fees for bounced checks and overdraft protection in case of insufficient funds.
3. Find ATMs in the same banking network to reduce fees. Ask if there is a limit on the number of free ATM transactions allowed per month.
4. Do not allow the bank to print your social security number or driver's license number on your checks.
5. After your account is set up, diligently keep track of all transactions and reconcile your statement. Ask for an explanation from your bank on fees or charges you don't understand.

Online vs. Paper Banking: Q & A

Q: Why should I bank online?

A: Doing your banking on the Internet allows you to do a number of things online (sometimes for no extra cost):

- Pay bills
- Review your accounts
- Transfer funds between accounts
- Check your account balance(s)
- Manage all accounts (savings, checking, etc.) in one place
- Reconcile your statement and balance your checkbook

Q: Is my information safe?

A: For many consumers, a real worry is whether the bank will protect their personal information. If security is a concern, ask for a copy of the bank's security and privacy policy. In addition, remember to keep your personal ID number (PIN) and account numbers private.

Q: What if I don't want to bank online?

A: If online banking isn't appealing, you can always use the paper checkbook that comes with your checks. Consider using duplicate checks or a computer program to help you balance your checkbook and keep your budget. Remember to keep track of ATM transactions. Save the paper copy of your statement each month for your records.

Q: Besides ATM fees, what other fees should I watch out for?

- A:
- Overdraft (more \$ withdrawn than you have in your acct.)
 - New checks
 - Inactivity fee
 - Stop-payment
 - Minimum balance fees
 - ATM fees (your bank's and others)
 - Annual checking fee

Always check your statement for any unusual activity. If you have any questions about your statement, call your bank immediately.

Additional College Costs

Before you head to college, make sure you've included these frequently overlooked costs in your budget:

- ID card replacement
- Late tuition payment
- Dorm damage
- Clothing
- Laundry
- Course materials / laboratory equipment
- Service fees for registration changes
- Transcript, application and document fees
- Appliances and utilities (if living in an apartment)
- Fraternity or sorority dues
- Computer / Internet costs
- Food and snacks
- Test prep fees
- Housing deposit
- Parking fees
- Gasoline

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3 Credit Card Alternatives

A recent Gallup poll showed the average American has over \$2,900 in credit card debt. You may want to consider these alternatives if acquiring too much debt is a concern.

1. Get a debit card, not a credit card. Credit card purchases require borrowing money, which translates into interest charges if you can't pay off the entire balance. Debit card purchases work like checks: money is transferred out of your checking account immediately after the purchase. No money borrowed means no interest.

2. Consider a pre-paid credit card. Pre-paid credit cards work like debit cards. When you make purchases, you use your own money that you've pre-loaded onto the card. There may be a nominal fee to set up this type of card.

3. Apply for a card with a very low credit limit. If you want to start building your credit rating before heading off to college, shop around for the best rate and apply for a low-limit card (around \$300 or less) that has no annual fee. The low limit should help you control your spending.