

Completing Loan Entrance Counseling

Who must complete Entrance Counseling?

Students borrowing Federal Direct Subsidized/Unsubsidized loans or PLUS Loans for the first time.

Why do I need to complete Entrance Counseling?

Entrance Counseling is required before you can receive Federal Direct Subsidized/Unsubsidized loans or your first PLUS loans as a graduate/professional student.

What information may help me complete Entrance Counseling?

Any details on your income, financial aid, and living expenses. Some of this information can be found in:

- Your student account information
- Your award letter from your school's financial aid office (if you have already received it)
- A listing of tuition and fees from your school

How do I complete Entrance Counseling?

1. The student must go to studentaid.gov and "Log In" using their FSA ID and Password.

The screenshot shows the StudentAid.gov homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Help Center', 'English | Español', 'Log In', and 'Create Account'. The 'Log In' link is circled in red. Below the navigation bar, there is a main heading 'You Are America's Smartest Investment' and a sub-heading 'The U.S. Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid provides more than \$120 billion in financial aid to help pay for college each year.' Below this, there are two buttons: 'Log In' and 'Create Account'. The 'Log In' button is circled in red. To the right of the main heading, there is a list of links: 'Corinthian/Manriquez Court Case', 'Complete the FAFSA® Form', 'Explore Ways to Lower Payments', 'Learn About Loan Forgiveness', and 'Find Out How to Make a Payment'. At the bottom, there are four columns representing different stages of the student's journey: 'Considering School', 'In School', 'Parent', and 'In Repayment'.

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2. Move your mouse to the top of the page and hover over the “COMPLETE AID PROCESS” dropdown. Click on the “Complete Entrance Counseling” link when it appears.

The screenshot shows the StudentAid.gov website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the following items: 'UNDERSTAND AID', 'APPLY FOR AID', 'COMPLETE AID PROCESS', and 'MANAGE LOANS'. The 'COMPLETE AID PROCESS' dropdown menu is open, and the 'Complete Entrance Counseling' link is highlighted with a red circle. Below the navigation bar, there is a section titled 'Entrance Counseling' with a sub-section 'What is Entrance Counseling?'. The text in this section explains that if you have not previously received a Direct Loan or Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL), the Federal Government requires you to complete entrance counseling to ensure that you understand the responsibilities and obligations you are assuming. It also states that if you are completing entrance counseling to borrow a loan as an undergraduate student, then the entrance counseling will fulfill counseling requirements for Direct Subsidized Loans and Direct Unsubsidized Loans.

3. Click the “Start” button under Complete Entrance Counseling.

The screenshot shows the 'COMPLETE COUNSELING' page on StudentAid.gov. The page title is 'COMPLETE COUNSELING'. Below the title, there is a section titled 'Entrance Counseling' with a sub-section 'What is Entrance Counseling?'. The text in this section explains that if you have not previously received a Direct Loan or Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL), the Federal Government requires you to complete entrance counseling to ensure that you understand the responsibilities and obligations you are assuming. It also states that if you are completing entrance counseling to borrow a loan as an undergraduate student, then the entrance counseling will fulfill counseling requirements for Direct Subsidized Loans and Direct Unsubsidized Loans. It also states that if you are completing entrance counseling to borrow a loan as a graduate or professional student, the entrance counseling will fulfill counseling requirements for Direct Subsidized Loans, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, and Direct PLUS Loans. Your school may have alternate entrance counseling requirements. Check with your school's financial aid office to be sure that the counseling available on this Web site satisfies its requirements for entrance counseling.

Below the text, there is a button labeled 'START' with a red arrow pointing to it. To the right of the 'START' button, there is a section titled 'Who should complete this?' with the following text: 'Students who have not previously received a subsidized/unsubsidized loan or PLUS loan (graduate/professional students only) under the Direct Loan Program or Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program.'

Below this, there is a section titled 'How long will it take?' with the following text: 'The entire counseling process must be completed in a single session. Most people complete counseling in 20-30 minutes.'

Below this, there is a section titled 'What do I need?' with the following list of items:

- School Name
- [Details on your income, financial aid, and living expenses](#)

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4. Search for the school by selecting “Illinois” as the state and “Northern Illinois University” as the school name. Then you need to click “Notify School”. When the school has been selected, your screen should look like the one on the bottom left.

The screenshot shows the 'Add School to Notify' section on the left and the 'Notify These Schools' section on the right. The 'Add School to Notify' section includes a dropdown for 'Choose from Associated Schools' (set to '- Select -'), an 'OR' separator, radio buttons for 'U.S. Schools/US Territory Schools' (selected) and 'Non U.S. Schools', a 'Choose a state:' dropdown (set to '- Select -'), and a 'Search school by name:' dropdown (set to 'Select or type'). The 'Notify These Schools' section contains the text 'You have not selected any schools to notify.' and 'These schools will only receive a notification indicating that you successfully completed Entrance Counseling, and the date it was completed.' Below this is the 'Select Student Type' section with two radio buttons: 'I am completing entrance counseling to receive Direct Loans as an undergraduate student.' (selected) and 'I am completing entrance counseling to receive Direct Loans as a graduate or professional student.' A blue 'Continue' button is positioned between the two sections.

[Help Center](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Feedback and Ombudsman](#)

[UNDERSTAND AID](#)

How Financial Aid Works
Types of Aid

[APPLY FOR AID](#)

Complete the FAFSA® Form
Complete Entrance Counseling

[COMPLETE AID PROCESS](#)

How Aid is Calculated
Complete School Exit Process

[MANAGE LOANS](#)

About Loan Repayment
Complete Exit Counseling

[MORE INFO](#)

Announcements & Events
Data Center

[Figure out](#)
what's next

Add School to Notify

Select up to 3 schools you wish to notify of your counseling completion.

✓ This school is participating in Entrance Counseling through StudentAid.gov.

School Name:
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

School Code/Branch:
G01737

School Address:
ALTGELD HALL - ROOM 300A
DEKALB, IL 601152854

[Notify this School](#)

[Go back to Search](#)

5. Next, indicate if you will be receiving loans as an “undergraduate” or “graduate or professional student”. Then, click “Continue”.

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6. **Section One: Understanding Your Loans.** Read the information about different types of financial aid, interest rates, and loan limits. Answer all quizzes in the boxes under each section titled “Check Your Knowledge.” You will not be able to advance until you get these answers correct. Click “Continue” when you get to the bottom to move on to the next section.

ENTRANCE COUNSELING

1 Understand Your Loans 2 Manage Your Spending 3 Plan To Repay 4 Avoid Default 5 Finances: A Priority

Your Student Loans

Current Loan Balance _____ \$ 0

The listing above does not include your private student loans and may not reflect all of your federal student loans. You may add any student loans not listed.

Add loans below

Your estimated student loan balance should reflect what you think you'll owe when you graduate. Use the "Add Loan" feature to add the loan amount(s) you think you'll owe by the time you graduate.

If you're not sure what you'll owe, you can use the following figures:

- \$6,707 Average debt for a single year of college
- \$26,830 Average debt of a 4-year college student
- 6.8% Interest rate

*College expense data is publicly available on-line at [College Navigator](#).

Enter your student loan information below

Remember, if you log in, we will display your current federal student loan information available in NSLDS.

Additional/Future Loans \$0

Did you know?

We automatically display your federal student loan data currently available in the [National Student Loan Data System \(NSLDS\)](#). You may also add a loan that is not displayed.

You may visit [NSLDS](#) anytime to view your federal student loan information.

ENTRANCE COUNSELING

1 Understand Your Loans 2 Manage Your Spending 3 Plan To Repay 4 Avoid Default 5 Finances: A Priority

Your Student Loans

Loan Basics

Free Money First

Types of Federal Student Loans

Loan Limits

Federal Direct Loans

- Federal student loans may be a way to address a shortfall between the funds that you have and the funds that you will need. There is always a cost to borrowing money but federal student loans may offer benefits, such as flexible repayment plans, that aren't available with other loans.

Direct Subsidized Loans

- If you're eligible, take advantage of Direct Subsidized Loans. The government pays the interest on a Direct Subsidized Loan that has retained the interest subsidy while you are in school and during certain other periods in most cases.

Check Your Knowledge

Which sources of federal student aid do you have to repay?

- Grants
- Federal Work-Study jobs
- Federal student loans
- All of the above

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7. **Section Two: Manage Your Spending.** You can enter information about your financial aid from your financial aid award letter. You can also enter estimated information if you do not know your award amounts. The expenses should have amounts listed for the school you selected earlier. Answer all quizzes in the boxes under each section titled “Check Your Knowledge” and then click “Continue” at the bottom.

The screenshot shows the 'ENTRANCE COUNSELING' page on StudentLoans.gov. The navigation bar includes 'Federal Student Aid', 'StudentLoans.gov', 'Hi.', 'Log Out', and a 'MENU' icon. The progress bar shows five steps: 1. Understand Your Loans (checked), 2. Manage Your Spending (active), 3. Plan To Repay, 4. Avoid Default, and 5. Finances: A Priority. The main content area is titled 'Your School Expense Budget' and includes a sidebar with links: 'Your School Expense Budget', 'Manage Your Expenses', 'Responsible Borrowing', and 'Federal Loans First'. The main text asks the user to enter the amount they expect to receive to help pay for school. Below this is a 'Your Funds' section with two columns: 'Student Aid (Yearly)' and 'Other Funds (Yearly)'. Each column has input fields for Scholarships, Grants, Federal Work-Study Jobs, Federal Student Loans, Private Loans, Employment, Parental Contributions, Prepaid Tuition, Personal Savings, and Other Contributions. All fields currently show '0'. At the bottom, there is a 'Your Funds This Year' summary field also showing '\$ 0'.

8. **Section Three: Plan To Repay.** Enter information about your projected income, if you are not sure how much to estimate, select the link “[CareerOneStop](#)” to search for income estimates by profession and state. Enter your Family Size, Projected Loan Balance, Interest Rate and State of Residence. The chart below will then show sample repayment amounts and indicate the repayment plans you may qualify for. Answer all quizzes in the boxes under each section titled “Check Your Knowledge” then click “Continue” at the bottom.

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The screenshot shows the 'ENTRANCE COUNSELING' page with five steps: 1. Understand Your Loans, 2. Manage Your Spending, 3. Plan To Repay (highlighted), 4. Avoid Default, and 5. Finances: A Priority. The left sidebar lists: Estimate What You Will Owe, Spend, and Earn; Entering Repayment; and Navigating Repayment. The main content area is titled 'Estimate What You Will Owe and Earn' and includes instructions to enter annual earnings and salary estimates. It features input fields for 'Projected Annual Income' and 'Other Withholding (%)', both currently set to 0. Calculated values for 'Estimated Federal Withholding', 'Net Annual Income', and 'Your Monthly Income' are all \$0. A note states: 'This assumes that you are single (unmarried) and that you have no tax withholding allowances. To estimate your actual withholding, visit the IRS Withholding Calculator.' The bottom of the page shows 'Your Estimated Future Monthly Loan Payment'.

9. **Section Four: Avoid Default.** Read the information to learn about Loan Deferment, Forbearance, Forgiveness, Default, and Consolidation. Answer all quizzes in the boxes under each section titled “Check Your Knowledge” then click “Continue” at the bottom.

The screenshot shows the 'ENTRANCE COUNSELING' page with five steps: 1. Understand Your Loans, 2. Manage Your Spending, 3. Plan To Repay, 4. Avoid Default (highlighted), and 5. Finances: A Priority. The left sidebar lists: Avoiding Default; Trouble Making Payments; Forgive, Cancel or Discharge Your Debts; Delinquency and Default; Records and Disputes; and Loan Consolidation. The main content area is titled 'Avoiding Default' and contains three expandable sections: 'Finish Your Program and Graduate', 'Pay on Time', and 'Stay In Touch With Your Federal Loan Servicer'. Below this is the 'Trouble Making Payments' section, which includes text about continuing payments and links to 'Plan to Repay'. A 'Remember!' callout box states: 'You MUST continue making payments on your federal student loan until you have been notified that your deferment or forbearance has been granted. If you don't, and it is not approved, you will become delinquent and may default on your federal student loans.'

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10. **Section Five: Finances: A Priority.** Read the information about saving, spending, tax deductions, credit score, and credit cards. Answer all quizzes in the boxes under each section titled “Check Your Knowledge.”

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UNDERSTAND AID ▾ APPLY FOR AID ▾ COMPLETE AID PROCESS ▾ MANAGE LOANS ▾

ENTRANCE COUNSELING

1 Understand Your Loans ✓ 2 Manage Your Spending ✓ 3 Plan To Repay ✓ 4 Avoid Default ✓ 5 **Finances: A Priority**

Plan for the Future

PLAN
Set specific and realistic goals
Use the tools in [Manage Your Spending](#) and [Plan to Repay](#) to set goals:

- Keep expenses low.
- Pay interest on your federal student loans while in school.
- Pay off credit card debt and limit use of credit cards.
- Save for large purchases, such as a car, so you don't have to borrow.

SAVE
Open a savings account

- Set up automatic deposits from your paycheck.
- Deposit gifts and bonuses.

Keep an emergency fund

- To cover unexpected expenses and avoid unnecessary borrowing.
- Save enough to cover 3 to 6 months of your normal expenses.

Did you know?
Most banks charge a fee if you spend more money than you have available in your account (overdraw).

11. Click “Submit Counseling” to finish. NIU will receive electronic confirmation in a few days.

Plan for the Future
Your Income & Taxes
Your Credit & Identity
Credit Cards & Other Borrowing

Credit Cards & Other Borrowing

Credit Cards

- Spend only what you can pay back immediately.
- Pay your balance in full each month to avoid interest and fees.
- Look for the lowest annual interest rate (APR) and fees.
- Read the fine print!
- Limit your number of credit cards.

Visit [Money Matters](#) and [MyMoney.gov](#) for more information on how to choose a credit card.

Other Borrowing

To reduce the amount borrowed for large purchases (e.g. a car):

- Plan ahead, and try to save for large purchases.
- Borrow only what you can afford to repay. (Use the calculator in the previous topics)
- Look for low interest rate and fees.

Did you know?
Making only the minimum payment on a balance of \$1,000 at an interest rate of 18.9% will take 5 years to pay off, for a total \$1,563!
[Do Your Own Calculation](#)

Remember!
Credit cards aren't the only way to build credit - making your federal student loan payments on time will help you build up a credit history.

[Exit](#) [Submit Counseling](#)