

If you are considering living off campus and/or changing your meal plan, make sure you understand the implications before making your final decision.

I'm considering living off campus. How will my financial aid be impacted?

Your financial aid does not change when you are approved by Residence Life to live off campus. You will no longer be charged for housing on your semester billing statements from Grinnell. Instead of paying Grinnell for housing, you will be paying a landlord and utility companies for housing expenses.

What if I am living with my family?

The housing and food components of your cost of attendance are adjusted to reflect the lower costs you will incur by living with your family. As such, your need-based financial aid will likely be impacted.

Can I use my financial aid to pay for my off-campus housing or my groceries?

Your financial aid is always first applied toward your billed expenses (i.e., tuition, fees, and other charges that appear on your semester billing statements). After aid is applied, you may owe a balance or have a credit balance, depending on the amount of aid you receive.

If you owe a balance, you will be responsible for paying the balance due to Grinnell. You will also be responsible for paying for all expenses that do not appear on the bill from the College, which may include housing; food; transportation; books, course materials, supplies, and equipment; and miscellaneous personal expenses.

If your financial aid exceeds your billed expenses, you will see a credit balance (a negative number or a number in parentheses) on your account. You can request a refund of all or part of this credit balance by contacting the Office of Student Accounts and then use those funds toward other expenses, such as housing; food; transportation; books, course materials, supplies, and equipment; and miscellaneous personal expenses. You will need to plan ahead to cover your expenses that are not covered by your financial aid.



Questions to Consider Before Signing a Lease to Live Off Campus

How will the cost of living off campus compare with the cost of living on campus? If it costs more to live off campus, you will be responsible for paying for any additional costs.

Are utilities included in your rent, or will you need to set these up yourself and pay for them separately? Utilities might include gas, electricity, water, trash, or WiFi. Consider requesting information on the previous 12-month utility expenses if utilities are not included in the cost of rent. If you incur these charges separately, estimate the monthly cost and include them in your budget.

How long is your lease? If you don't plan to live there for the full lease term, are you allowed to sublease? What happens if your sublease falls through?

Do you have a backup plan if a roommate falls through? Who will pay their share of the rent and/or utilities?

Will my financial aid change if I change my meal plan?

Your financial aid does not change if you choose an alternate meal plan. You are charged on your Grinnell billing statement for the meal plan you choose.

Choosing an option besides the full meal plan may require you to purchase groceries and cook some of your meals yourself.

Please note that first-year students are required to enroll in the full meal plan. Returning students have other options depending on their housing status. [Dining Services' website](#) (login required) offers additional details on meal plan options.

How can I estimate my balance due or my credit balance?

You can estimate whether you will owe a balance to Grinnell or have a credit balance on your student account by following these steps:

1. Add together your estimated charges for one semester (i.e., tuition, fees, the meal plan you are choosing, and housing if you are living on campus).
2. Subtract your grants, scholarships, and loans for one semester from the total estimated charges.
3. If the difference is positive, this is the estimated amount you will owe for the semester. If the difference is negative, this is your estimated credit balance for the semester.

Remember that charges and need-based financial aid eligibility are determined annually and can change from year to year.

Questions to Consider Before Changing Your Meal Plan

If you choose a reduced meal plan, how often will you need to prepare your own meals? How will you get to the grocery store? How much time will it take to shop and cook for yourself? What utensils will you need to purchase?

If you cook some of your meals, how much will you spend each week on groceries? How many meals per week will you eat out or order takeout? Add these expenses into your budget.

Are you choosing the meal plan that best meets your needs? We encourage you to choose an option that will help you be healthy and focus on the academic and social aspects of your Grinnell education.