



For Members of the U.S. Armed Forces



What you need to know about your federal student loan benefits

Thank you for your service

As America's servicemen and servicewomen, you've always been there for us when we needed you. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) and your federal student loan servicers appreciate the sacrifices you make for our country and we want to be there for you, too. Our teams of dedicated customer care representatives can help you access benefits available on your loans, review repayment options, and help you create a plan to manage your federal student loans while you are far from home.

Federal Student Loan Benefits for Members of the Armed Forces

This brochure provides information pertaining to federal student loan benefits and repayment options available from ED and the U.S. Department of Defense (D.O.D.) to assist members of the Armed Forces who have federal student loans. Contact your federal student loan servicer for additional information, including eligibility information and required documentation.

Some of these benefits may also be available on some types of private student loans. If you have private student loans, contact your private student loan servicer for more information.

| Benefit | Description | Eligibility | Documentation Requirements |
|---|---|--|--|
| Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) Interest Rate Cap | Interest rate on federal student loans you received before your military service is capped at 6% during periods of active duty. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For loans disbursed prior to active duty start date. For federal student loans, the earliest benefit effective date is August 14, 2008; active duty periods that fall on or after that date may qualify. If you consolidate your federal student loans after you begin active duty, your consolidation loan may not be eligible for the benefit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your federal student loan servicer will check an authorized military database, and if you are listed as being in active duty status will automatically apply the benefit to your eligible loan(s).[*] If your military orders show an earlier active duty start date, you may submit a copy of your orders, and your servicer will apply the benefit based on the earlier start date. You may also request the benefit by submitting a completed SCRA Interest Rate Request form, a completed Military Service and Post-Active Duty Student Deferment Request, or a copy of your orders. |
| Military Service Deferment | You can postpone loan repayment during certain periods of active duty and immediately following active duty. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For active duty military service during a war, other military operation, or national emergency. Assigned to a duty station other than your normal station. Periods of training or attending service school are not eligible for deferment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Military Service and Post-Active Duty Student Deferment Request form with a certification from an authorized official in Section 4; or Completed deferment request form with a written statement from your commanding/ personnel officer; or Completed deferment request form with a copy of your military orders; or If you cannot submit a deferment request form or other documentation, a verbal request from you or your representative. Deferment based on a verbal request is limited to an initial twelve-month period. |
| Deferments After Active Duty | You can postpone repayment while you prepare to return to school following your active duty. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following service during a war, other military operation, or national emergency. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military Service and Post-Active Duty Student Deferment Request form with a certification from an authorized official in Section 4; or Completed deferment request form with a written statement from your commanding/ personnel officer; or Completed deferment request form with a copy of your military orders. |
| Public Service Loan Forgiveness | You may qualify for forgiveness of the remaining balance of your Federal Direct Loans. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Direct Loans only. Employed full-time at a qualifying government or nonprofit public service organization, including military service. Make 120 on-time qualifying payments after October 1, 2007 while in a qualifying income driven or 10 year standard repayment plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit an Employment Certification Form to determine eligibility. |

^{*}Federal loan servicers and many private loan servicers complete this proactive match. Contact your loan servicer for more information.

| Benefit | Description | Eligibility | Documentation Requirements |
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| No Interest Accrual | While you are serving in a hostile area that qualifies you for special pay, you do not have to pay interest for up to 60 months. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Subsidized Loans, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, and Direct PLUS Loans made on or after October 1, 2008. • For a Direct Consolidation Loan, the portion of the loan that represents loans made on or after October 1, 2008. | <p>Proof of deployment in a hostile area, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed Military Service and Post-Active Duty Student Deferment Request form with a certification from an authorized official certifying your service in an area of hostilities that qualifies you for special pay; or • Military orders showing you're serving in a hostile area; or • A Leave and Earnings Statement showing you're receiving hostile or imminent danger pay. |
| Income-Driven Repayment Plans | Repayment plans that base your monthly payment on your income and family size are available for federal student loans. Under these plans, you may qualify for a low or zero payment amount with the possibility of forgiveness of the remaining balance in 20 to 25 years. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility requirements vary depending on loan type and repayment plan. Contact your federal student loan servicer to determine your eligibility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed Income-Driven Repayment Plan Request and documentation of income. |
| HEROES Act Waiver | While you are on active duty, ED waives certain documentation requirements for federal student loans. For example, if you are on an income-driven repayment plan and military service prevents you from providing updated income and family size information, this documentation requirement will be waived and your current monthly payment amount will be maintained. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active duty military service during a war, other military operation, or national emergency. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military orders. • Your federal student loan servicer may apply a waiver if they have information that you are actively serving in the military and qualify for the waiver. |
| Department of Defense (D.O.D.) Repayment of Your Loans | In certain circumstances, as determined by the D.O.D., all or a portion of your federal student loans may be repaid by the D.O.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies based on branch of military. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact your designated Military Personnel Officer or representative for more information. |
| Total and Permanent Disability Discharge | If you have a service-connected disability, you may qualify for discharge of your federal student loans. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that you are unemployable due to a service-connected disability; or • Determination by the Social Security Administration (SSA) or a physician that you are unemployable due to a total and permanent disability. | <p>For a VA service-connected disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total and Permanent Disability Discharge Application. You may need to provide additional documentation from the VA showing that you are unemployable due to a service-connected disability. <p>For a total and permanent disability unrelated to your service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total and Permanent Disability Discharge Application and additional documentation from the SSA or your physician indicating that you have a total and permanent disability. <p>To view more information on supporting documentation requirements for Total and Permanent Disability Discharge, visit disabilitydischarge.com.</p> |

Helpful tips for active duty or if you are deployed

1. Consider granting a power of attorney to an individual you trust to allow him or her to manage your financial matters, including your federal student loans. The person to whom you give power of attorney can sign documents and act on your behalf. The legal assistance office on your military base can assist with establishing a power of attorney. As an alternative, you can provide your servicer with the name of the person you approve to receive information about your loan.
2. Establish an account on your servicer's website, which will allow you to view information about your federal student loan and make payments online.
3. Provide your servicer with your current contact information, including an e-mail address, to ease communication.
4. Make interest payments, even if you have military deferment available to you. This will keep your balance from increasing and could save you money in the long run.
5. Review your repayment options. Repayment plans based on your income may provide a better outcome for federal student loans, as you may qualify for a low payment and loan forgiveness.
6. Sign up for automatic payments to help keep your loan(s) in good standing.
7. Place an active duty alert on your credit report to reduce the risk that you'll become a victim of identity theft. When a business sees an active duty alert on your credit report, it must verify your identity before issuing credit. You may designate a personal representative (a spouse or another trusted person) who can act on your behalf to verify your identity or remove your active duty alert if needed.

Useful student loan resources

| Resource | Description |
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| Federal Student Aid StudentAid.gov/military StudentAid.gov 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) | Learn more about government and nonprofit organizations that offer money for college to veterans, future military personnel, active duty personnel, or those related to veterans or active duty personnel. If you have federal student loans, you can learn about repayment plans, deferment and forbearance, and other options to help you repay your loans. |
| National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS®) NSLDS.ed.gov | Find out who is servicing your federal loans with NSLDS's comprehensive database. |
| D.O.D. and VA Military Information Programs MilitaryOneSource.mil/ TodaysMilitary.com/living/paying-for-college Benefits.va.gov/gibill/ | Information and resources for servicemembers and their families including information on veterans benefits and paying for college. |
| Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) scra.dmdc.osd.mil/scra/#/home | Get more information about the benefits available through SCRA. |
| Equifax - Equifax.com Experian - Experian.com TransUnion - Transunion.com Innovis - Innovis.com | These are nationwide consumer reporting agencies where you can place an active duty alert on your credit report. Simply enter "active duty alert" in the website search box for forms and contact information. |
| Total and Permanent Disability Discharge DisabilityDischarge.com | Get more information on loan discharge for disabled veterans. |

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