

# CheapScholar's Guide To Having A Car On Campus - Freedom Or Financial Drain?

Whether to have a car on campus is probably one of the greatest debates that an incoming college student can encounter. Some students don't have to worry about making this choice because it has already been made for them... either the college doesn't permit first year students to have a car on campus -or- mom and dad have just simply said "No.. not a good idea and that is that..." However, if you are a student that does have an option of whether to have a car on campus, let's go ahead and look at the pros and cons as to whether you should bring the keys or leave them at home.

## Reasons Why You Should Have A Car on Campus

- **You will look cool to all your friends:** Many of your friends may not have been able to talk mom and dad into letting them have a car on campus. Since you have a car, you have something that they don't (see next bullet point)...
- **Freedom:** You can come and go as you like at anytime of day or night. No relying on public transportation or college campus transporters in your future!
- **Increased popularity:** Not only do you look cool (as mentioned above) but now you have a way to make more friends. You are now the cool dude (or dudette) AND you are able to take all your newly founded friends to the store, to the mall, to Chipotle, and yes maybe even to class every now and again.
- **You can visit home more often:** or at least that is the story you will tell mom and dad!
- **You will smell better:** I know... this one is a little bit of a stretch but do you know how hard it is to get your clothes clean when you have to cart them to and from the laundry mat on the bus or with your bike?

## Reasons Why You Should NOT Have A Car on Campus

- **The Car Payment:** If you already have a car (and it is paid off) then this does not apply to you. However, if you are purchasing a car specifically for college you may want to think twice if you have to get a car loan.
- **Maintenance:** Whether your car is brand new or ten years old, there are things that you must do on a regular basis to keep your car properly maintained. (oil changes, tire rotations, alignments – especially if your college is in the midwest – pothole central!, brake inspections, replacement of air filters – and don't forget the air fresheners while you are at it) All these things usually come at a price...
- **Car Repair:** This is different than Maintenance in the sense that this is something that needs replaced or repaired in order for your car to actually get you from point a to point b. Some good examples; transmission, engine gaskets, water pump, alternator, steering pump, etc...
- **Petrol, Gas, Go Go Juice:** Whatever you call it, it is the stuff that your car needs in order to be a car. Without the gas, your car is just a 1 ton paperweight.
- **Auto Insurance:** Since this is not an optional fee, if you have a car, you WILL need to have and pay for insurance.
- **Parking Tickets & The Infamous Boot:** If you don't have a car, you don't have to worry about paying for parking tickets, paying fines to get a boot removed, or paying for tow charges to get your car out of the impound lot. You may laugh, but based upon experience, it seems like every college student that has a car on campus pays one or more of these fees at least once during their college career.
- **Walking Campus:** Most residential campuses like to refer to themselves as a walking campus. This means that you can walk from one side of campus to the other and not have to pack a lunch for the journey. If you are attending a residential campus, a car may not be as important of an attribute to maintain.
- **Alternate Transportation:** Bicycling, walking, public transportation, etc... All of these are things that you can utilize in lieu of a car. If you have doubt, ask anyone that is from New York City. They have mastered all three.
- **Pay To Park:** Most schools require you to pay a fee to have access to the school parking lot each semester. In addition, it is probable that you may have to pay a fee just to register your car with the campus.

So, I guess we are back to the question at hand... Is having a car on campus a sign of your freedom or is it more of a financial drain. The financial resources that you have available probably dictate your response to that decision but at the end of the day it is more than likely the emotional factor of the decision that will win out. Regardless of which route you choose, just be sure to plan ahead and know all the ways in which your decision will impact your time on campus and your availability and access to things off campus.



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