01

Life after high school

Ages 16-20 | Pick a path. Build a month. Make your next move.



YOUR NEXT MOVE. YOUR FIRST BUDGET.

Choose a fictional future, plan your month and handle a change. You do not need to share your own finances. Grab a pen and a calculator, or use the online version.

TRY IT. CHANGE IT. TRY AGAIN.

A gap is information about this version of the plan, not a verdict about you. Keep essentials covered, check real options and revise at your own pace. No scores. No penalties.

Your route through the challenge

01 Choose your path (page 2). **02 Check** starter costs (page 3). **03 Build** Attempt 1 (page 4). **04 Adapt** after a change (page 5). **05 Check timing** and setup money (page 6). **06 Compare** examples and set your next step (pages 7-8).

The path I want to explore:

02

Choose your starting path

All people, pay amounts and funding allocations below are fictional.

Alex, 18 | Study + live at home

College + part-time work. $18.50/hour for 15 hours/week: about $1,203 gross and $1,130 estimated take-home per average month. The household contribution is an agreement in this fictional story, not a Toronto rent quote. No student aid is assumed.

Grant/loan funding starts at **$0**. Opening setup savings: **$400**.

Jordan, 19 | Work + rent a room

Work + private room in a shared home. $18.50/hour for 37.5 hours/week: about $3,006 gross and $2,500 estimated take-home per average month. $1,250 rent is a planning example; utilities are separate here. It is not a guaranteed listing.

Grant/loan funding starts at **$0**. Opening setup savings: **$600**.

Sam, 18 | Work + train

Work while preparing for training. $22/hour for 35 hours/week: about $3,337 gross and $2,740 estimated take-home per average month. The wage is a fictional offer, not a standard apprenticeship rate. Family housing is available only in this story.

Grant/loan funding starts at **$0**. Opening setup savings: **$500**.

Choose, do not assume

Living with family must be available, safe and agreed. A room needs a verified arrangement and a workable commute. The work-and-train profile is preparation for a trade pathway, not a guaranteed apprenticeship job or wage.

Take-home is different from advertised pay.

Ontario general minimum wage is $17.95/hour from October 1, 2026. Net pay is a rounded estimate using 2026 CRA parameters and the stated hours. Actual deposits vary; no union, benefit or pension deductions are included. Use actual payslips for a real plan.

What would I need to verify before using this path in real life?

03

Build the ordinary month

Use these starter estimates, then replace them with realistic confirmed amounts.

Monthly allocation	Study + home	Work + room	Work + train
Housing / household contribution	$400	$1250	$550
Utilities / internet	$0	$90	$0
Food / groceries	$350	$400	$350
Transit	$94	$94	$94
Phone	$39.55	$39.55	$39.55
Tuition / training reserve	$350	$0	$100
Books / tools reserve	$75	$0	$100
Personal / health	$70	$100	$90
Laundry	$20	$30	$25
Social / recreation	$60	$100	$100
Emergency saving	$75	$100	$100
Future goal saving	$50	$100	$100
Tenant insurance	$0	$35	$0

Read before you copy

Verified transit: 40 youth PRESTO fares x $2.35 = $94. All profiles are 18 or 19. Check the fare setting, actual trip and 47-fare cap. GO and adult fares differ.

Estimate, not a quote: Groceries $350-$500+; room $1,250; tenant insurance $35; phone $39.55 including Ontario HST. Source details and assumptions are on page 9.

Study reserve: $350/month = $4,200/year. Centennial sample domestic tuition is $2,775 plus ancillary fees; $1,425 is an unverified fee allowance here. Books are separate. Confirm actual fees and dates.

04

Attempt 1: plan a month

Write amounts in CAD. No names or private information are needed.

Money available	Amount
Take-home pay	$
Confirmed grant allocation	$
Borrowed funds allocation	$
Other confirmed support	$
A. Total available funds	$

Monthly allocation	My amount
Housing / household contribution	$
Utilities / internet	$
Food / groceries	$
Transit	$
Phone	$
Tuition / training reserve	$
Books / tools reserve	$
Personal / health	$
Laundry	$
Social / recreation	$
Emergency saving	$
Future goal saving	$
Tenant insurance	$
B. Total allocations	$
A minus B = unallocated amount / gap	$

Positive: decide what it is for. Negative: identify the size of the gap without blaming the person. Opening setup savings are not recurring income. Do not count them in A.

05

Attempt 2: life changes

Pick one event or use two together. These changes apply to this month only.

A repair bill: A fictional one-time $180 phone repair. Compare a repair, replacement or temporary borrowed device. Do not assume insurance covers it.

Fewer shifts: This month’s take-home pay falls by $240. More hours next month are not confirmed income for today.

Books cost more: A one-time $120 course or training materials gap. Ask about used, library, loan or employer options; verify availability first.

A friend invites you out: An optional all-in $55 outing. Choose to include it, propose another plan or remove the event. No shame either way.

Recalculate	Amount
Original funds (A)	$
Less lost take-home pay	$
C. Revised funds	$
Original allocations (B)	$
Plus one-time event cost	$
Plus / minus deliberate changes	$
D. Revised allocations	$
C minus D = new unallocated amount / gap	$

One change I can actually make, and its trade-off:

Something I would verify or someone I could ask for support:

Do not solve a recurring gap by inventing guaranteed shifts, funding or free housing. A cheaper plan must still cover needs. Borrowing creates a repayment obligation. Try another version on a fresh copy of pages 4-5.

06

Dates and setup money

A balanced month can still have an upfront or first-week cash gap.

A / Extra setup costs: the room example

Extra need beyond the ordinary monthly budget	Amount
Last-month rent deposit: scenario	$1,250
Moving costs	$250
Basic setup items	$200
Starting buffer	$300
Extra setup target	$2,000
Less opening savings	$600
Extra setup gap	$1,400

First-month rent of $1,250 is already in the monthly housing row. Do not add it to the extra setup target again. First plus last rent is $2,500 before moving, items and buffer; verify actual rental terms. The study profile uses a $150 extra starter allowance and work-and-train uses $350; neither includes all possible tuition, deposits or tools.

B / A separate first-week timing check

Before first income arrives	My amount
Cash actually on hand	$
Bills / essentials due before then	$
Cash minus early bills = left / timing gap	$

If there is a timing gap, what can be confirmed before committing?

For study: list actual tuition due dates and when grants/loans arrive. A $350 reserve each month does not solve a tuition bill due before that reserve has built up. Money sent directly to school is not also available for groceries.

07

Compare the possibilities

These are examples of the starter budgets, not the only acceptable choices.

Starter path	Funds	Allocations	Left
Study + live at home	$1,130.00	$1,583.55	$-453.55
Work + rent a room	$2,500.00	$2,338.55	$161.45
Work + train	$2,740.00	$1,648.55	$1,091.45

Study + live at home: A $180 repair changes the remaining amount from $-453.55 to $-633.55. A $240 pay reduction changes it to $-693.55. Both together change it to $-873.55.

Work + rent a room: A $180 repair changes the remaining amount from $161.45 to $-18.55. A $240 pay reduction changes it to $-78.55. Both together change it to $-258.55.

Work + train: A $180 repair changes the remaining amount from $1,091.45 to $911.45. A $240 pay reduction changes it to $851.45. Both together change it to $671.45.

One possible revision: work + room

With fewer shifts and the repair, the room profile has a $258.55 gap. Reducing recreation from $100 to $60 frees $40; reducing the future-goal allocation from $100 to $60 frees another $40. The result is a remaining $178.55 gap. This postpones part of a goal and reduces social spending. It does not make the income more secure or fix the $1,400 setup gap.

Do not make a surplus the only goal.

A plan that removes food, medicine, safety or all realistic participation may be mathematically positive and practically unworkable. Verify actual needs. If basic costs exceed resources, discuss supports, pay, housing and timelines rather than treating it as a motivation problem.

Which adjustment would I keep, reject or replace, and why?

08

Your next move starts here

Keep the useful parts. Check the unknowns. Come back when your plans change.

Before you commit to a real plan

YOUR FOUR-POINT CHECK

[ ] I used take-home pay and confirmed funding. [ ] I included everyday needs, not just rent. [ ] I checked upfront costs and payment dates. [ ] I know which figures still need a real quote.

One choice I would make differently after this challenge:

One number I need to verify, and where I will check it:

Keep your plan grounded

Use the source and assumptions page next. Replace allowances with actual quotes. Keep confirmed support separate from possible support. Check school deadlines, housing terms and your own essential needs before acting.

A person or service I could ask a specific question:

09

Know what each number means

Source check: October 21, 2026 | Verified references + modeled estimates

Published references and planning choices

Groceries: U of T lists $350+ monthly. This challenge uses a $350-$500+ planning range, not a universal minimum. **Room:** $1,250 is a shared-home example, not a listing guarantee; U of T housing spans $1,220-$2,700 by type. **Insurance:** $35 is an allowance within its $30-$50 guide; request a personal quote.

Phone: $35 before tax x 1.13 = $39.55 for service only; Public Mobile advertises plans from $35 with other options available. Device payments, billing periods and eligibility must be checked. **Utilities:** $90 is a scenario allowance; confirm what rent includes.

Pay: gross uses wage x hours x 52 / 12. Rounded net estimates use 2026 federal/Ontario basic credits, employment credit, CPP, EI and Ontario health premium. Assumes a single Ontario job, age 18+ all year, steady hours and no extra deductions or TD1 claims. No refunds, benefits or tuition credits are added. These are not exact paycheques.

TTC fares and fare capping - open original source

TTC youth fares - open original source

CRA 2026 Ontario payroll parameters - open original source

Ontario minimum wage - open original source

U of T Toronto living-cost guide - open original source

Public Mobile current plans - open original source

Centennial 2026-27 tuition - open original source

OSAP eligibility and funding - open original source

Scarborough room listings - open original source

Checked October 21, 2026. Profile amounts are fictional teaching estimates. Actual fees, offers, eligibility and housing arrangements vary. Loans are borrowed funds, not earnings. This challenge does not calculate exact payroll deductions or financial-aid awards.