

Back to School Costs: 1/3 of Parents Spend More Than \$500

🕒 August 6, 2019 👤 Gina Pogol ➔ Content Categories, Personal Loans ✎ Edit



Back to school costs include much more than number 2 pencils and notebooks. Sports, activities, and technology add up. A new survey by AmOne.com shows that 32% of parents who spend for back to school will pay more than \$500 for back to school costs. And that doesn't include private school tuition. Here's where the money goes, and how to pay the costs.

[Find personal loans for back-to-school costs, private school tuition and other expenses](#)

Back to school costs: more than pencils

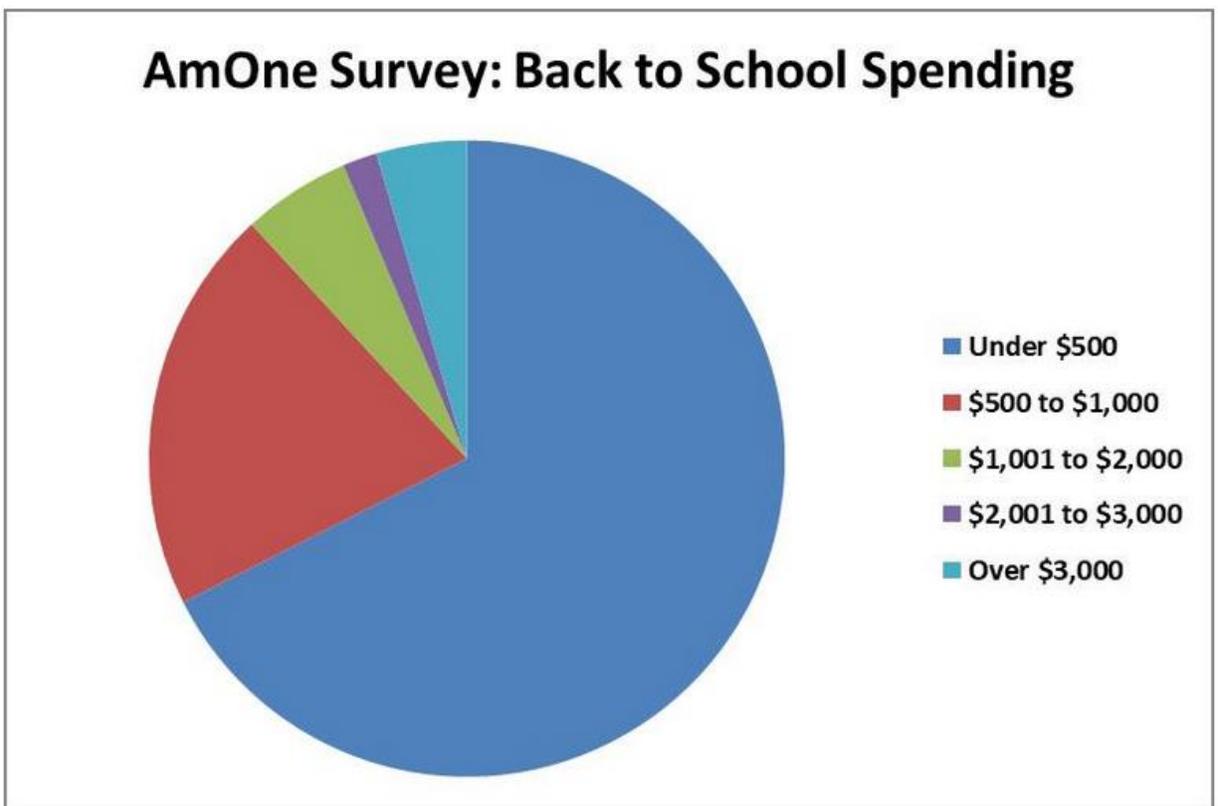
AmOne's survey of 1,000 parents of school-age children turned up some surprising findings. At least they're surprising if you remember your own back to school shopping. The new pencil case, a 3-ring binder and a few reams of paper. Perhaps some art supplies. And if you were lucky, you got a super hero lunch box or designer book cover.

But requirements and expenses are higher today. While 54% of respondents said they have zero back-to-school costs (perhaps parents of very young children), those who have costs are paying a lot more than the price of a few items from Office Depot.

Here's the spending breakdown for those who purchase school-related items:

Spending Amount Percent of respondents

Under \$500	68%
\$500 to \$1,000	21%
\$1,001 to \$2,000	5%
\$2,001 to \$3,000	2%
Over \$3,000	5%



In general, older students have higher back-to-school costs than younger ones. Most likely because of extracurricular activities like music, sports and art, which often require special clothing, equipment or supplies.

Average cost of school supplies

Here's a quick rundown of common back-to-school requirements and their average costs, courtesy of the National Retail Foundation:

- School supplies from a typical list, including a backpack and calculator: \$101.18

- Clothes: \$231.30
- Shoes: \$124.46
- Electronics (mainly for older students): \$229.88

And here is that typical school list for elementary school kids, courtesy of *Good Housekeeping*:

Kindergarten/preschool (cost: \$110)

- Pencil box (\$4)
- Crayons (\$4)
- Colored pencils (\$6)
- Washable markers (\$5)
- No. 2 pencils (\$6)
- Pencil sharpener (\$7)
- Erasers (\$6)
- Glue sticks (\$6)
- Blunt-tipped scissors (\$3)
- Plastic folders (\$15 for six)
- Assorted construction paper (\$5)
- Wide-ruled notebook or pad (\$4)
- Tissues (\$2)
- Backpack (\$20)
- Lunchbox or bag (\$17)

Grades 1 through 3 (cost: \$123)

- Pencil box (\$4)
- Crayons (\$4)
- Colored pencils (\$6)
- Washable markers (\$5)
- No. 2 pencils (\$6)
- Pencil sharpener (\$7)
- Ballpoint pens (\$6)
- Erasers (\$6)
- Glue sticks (\$6)
- Ruler (\$4)
- Blunt-tipped scissors (\$3)
- Plastic folders (\$15 for six)
- Assorted construction paper (\$5)
- Wide-ruled notebook or pad (\$4)
- Index cards (\$3)
- Tissues (\$2)
- Backpack (\$20)
- Lunchbox or bag (\$17)

Grades 3 through 6 (cost: \$195)

- Pencil pouch (\$10 for 4)
- Blue or black ballpoint pens (\$9)
- No. 2 pencils (\$6)
- Pencil sharpener (\$7)
- Highlighters (\$6)
- Washable markers (\$5)
- Erasers (\$6)
- Three-ring binder (\$7)
- Three-hole-punch (\$8)
- Loose-leaf paper or spiral notebooks (\$11 for 6)
- Graph paper (\$7)
- Subject dividers (\$8)
- Index cards (\$3)
- Plastic folders (\$15 for 6)
- Glue (\$4)
- Ruler (\$4 for 4)
- Scissors (\$4)
- Calculator (\$6)
- Personal organizer/ planner (\$13)
- Book covers (\$14 for 4)
- Backpack (\$25 and up)
- Lunchbox or bag (\$17)

Middle and high school (cost: \$330)

- Pencil pouch (\$10 for 4)
- Blue or black ballpoint pens (\$9)
- No. 2 pencils (\$6)
- Pencil sharpener (\$7)
- Highlighters (\$6)
- Permanent markers (\$13)
- Erasers (\$6)
- Three-ring binder (\$7)
- Three-hole-punch (\$8)
- Loose-leaf paper or spiral notebooks (\$11 for 6)
- Graph paper (\$7)
- Subject dividers (\$8)
- Index cards (\$3)
- Plastic folders (\$15 for 6)
- Glue (\$4)
- Post-it Notes (\$6)
- White-Out (\$4)
- Protractor (\$4)
- Ruler (\$4)
- Scissors (\$4)

- Graphing calculator (\$110)
- Combination lock (\$9)
- Personal organizer/ planner (\$13)
- Book covers (\$14 for 4)
- Backpack (\$25 and up)
- Lunchbox or bag (\$17)

Back to school clothing

According to a survey from public accounting firm Deloitte, back to school clothing can make up over half (54%) of the total back to school budget. In fact, about 90% of consumers expect to spend nearly \$300 on clothing.

Kids grow. They wear out clothes. And most want to start school with a new look, so parents often report feeling pressure to overspend.

If you spend a couple hundred for school supplies and then another \$300 on clothing and shoes, it's easy to hit that \$500 mark. Or go even bigger if your child requires an instrument, team uniform or other extra-curricular supplies.

Cost of school sports and activities

According to *MarketWatch*, the cost of sports and other activities can be prohibitive for parents. In fact, kids in households with incomes under \$100,000 a year participate in these valuable activities only half as much as children in wealthier homes. [MarketWatch](#) reports these additional average annual costs for enrichment activities:

- \$408 for sports
- \$251 for arts activities
- \$126 for other activities

So if you have one older student participating in sports, you may be looking at a \$1,000 in back to school costs. And costs can reach into thousands if you have several children starting school this year.

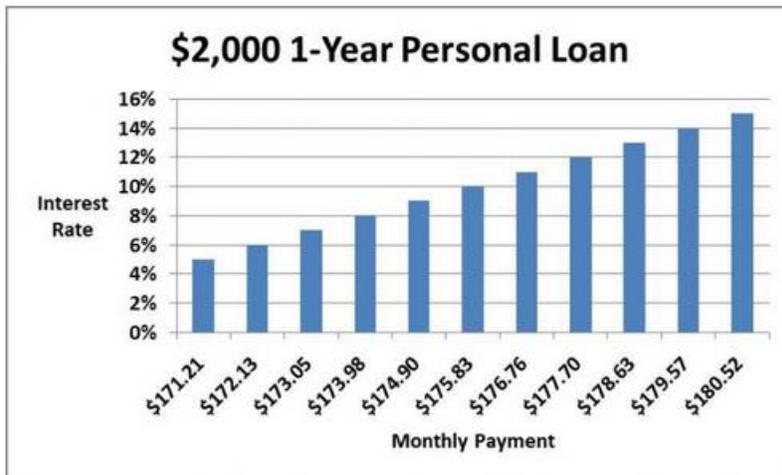
But wait; there's more: private school tuition

Parents who have opted out of the public school system shoulder an even greater burden. Most schools require parents to pay for private school before the year begins. Others break it into two semi-annual installments. According to Private School Review, the national average private school tuition is approximately \$10,671 per year. So you may have to come up with at least half of that right now if you have one student in private school.

Paying for school with a personal loan

It may be convenient to put your back-to-school costs on a credit card. But that can be a very expensive method of payment. So if you can't pay off your credit card balance right away, and your costs exceed a few hundred dollars, consider a personal loan.

Your monthly payment depends on your loan amount and interest rate. Here's an example for a \$2,000 one-year loan.



Unlike credit cards, personal loans usually offer fixed interest rates. While you can generally choose a term from one to five years, it's probably best to finance the costs over 12 months. So you'll have this year's costs repaid before next year's back to school frenzy begins.

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