

STUDY & EXAMS · 9 min read · September 23, 2026 · By Kelly Stratton

Free ChatGPT Plus and Gemini for College Students: How to Claim Both Before the Deadlines

Get \$320 of AI free this school year: the exact steps to claim four months of ChatGPT Plus and a year of Gemini, who qualifies, how SheerID checks you, the renewal catch to plan for, and the five prompts every student should have on day one.

If you're a college student, or you've got one in the house, there's \$320 of AI sitting on the table right now. OpenAI is giving students four months of ChatGPT Plus for free, and Google is giving a full year of Gemini's paid plan, Google AI Pro. Both are real, both come from the companies themselves, and both have a deadline and a catch. This guide is the exact steps to claim each one, who qualifies, what to expect from the student check, the renewal thing to put on your calendar today, and the five prompts I'd hand any student on day one.

IN A NUTSHELL

Two offers, both for US college students. ChatGPT Plus: four months free, an \$80 value, verified through your school with SheerID, claim by October 31, 2026. Google AI Pro: twelve months free, a \$240 value, claim by December 31, 2026. Both need a card on file and both renew at full price when the free months end, so set two reminders the day you sign up.

WHAT THE OFFERS ARE

These are the two big AI companies' back-to-school deals for 2026. OpenAI's gives eligible US college and graduate students four free monthly billing periods of ChatGPT Plus, including ChatGPT Work. Google's gives eligible US college students one year of Google AI Pro, the paid Gemini plan, with higher Gemini limits, Gemini inside Gmail and Docs, and 5 TB of storage.

WHAT YOU NEED

Current enrollment, full-time or part-time, at a US degree-granting college or graduate school. A school email or your school login, for the verification step. A ChatGPT account and a Google account (they can use any email). A debit or credit card for each, which won't be charged during the free period. And a web browser: the ChatGPT offer has to be claimed on the web, not inside the phone app.

PART 1 How Do I Claim Four Months of ChatGPT Plus?

This is OpenAI's 2026 Back to School offer. Every step here is from OpenAI's own help page, linked at the bottom.

1. Open chatgpt.com/students/2026 in a web browser on your phone or computer. Not the ChatGPT app.
2. Sign in to the ChatGPT account you want the free months on. **This matters:** the offer sticks to whichever account is signed in when you claim it, and OpenAI can't move it afterward.
3. Click **Claim free offer** and follow the **SheerID** prompts. Depending on your school, it checks enrollment records automatically, asks you to sign in through your school's login, or asks for a document, like a current class schedule or tuition receipt.
4. Come back to the offer page after verification and finish activation. If you're new to Plus, add a card when it asks. You won't be charged for the four free months.

Who qualifies. Current full-time and part-time college and graduate students at eligible US degree-granting schools. SheerID decides whether your school and your enrollment count.

After you claim it. Plus works everywhere you use that account, phone app included. Only the claiming has to happen in a browser.

Already paying for Plus? You can still claim it, as long as your Plus is billed directly by ChatGPT. If you pay through the Apple App Store or Google Play, the offer can't be applied while it's store-billed, so switch to direct billing first.

The dates. Claim by **October 31, 2026**. Your four free monthly billing periods start the day you claim. One claim per person.

The catch. After the four months, it renews at **full price** unless you cancel. And if you cancel early, you keep Plus through the end of that billing month and lose whatever free months were left. So don't cancel to be safe; set a reminder instead (Part 3).

PART 2 How Do I Claim a Year of Gemini?

This is Google's back-to-school offer, announced August 19, 2026. Google AI Pro is the paid Gemini plan, and students get a full year of it free.

1. Go to gemini.google/students, click **Claim Free Student Plan**, and sign in with the Google account you want it on.
2. Confirm you're an eligible US college student when it asks.
3. Add a valid payment method. You won't be charged during the twelve free months. That's it, you're set.

What's in it. Four times the usage limits in Gemini, Gemini inside Gmail and Google Docs, Gemini Spark, 5 TB of storage, and Google Health Premium. Study notebooks (upload your lecture notes and Gemini builds a study plan with quizzes), interactive 3D

visualizations, and Deep Research in Gemini Live rolled out to everyone the same day.

The dates. Claim by **December 31, 2026**. Twelve months free from the day you claim.

The catch. Google's own terms: a valid form of payment is required at sign-up, and unless you cancel earlier, Google AI Pro automatically charges **full price** after the year. Same rule: reminder, not a panic cancel.

Outside the US? Google's offer for students elsewhere is a free year of Google AI Plus, a smaller plan, through the same page.

PART 3 The Renewal Catch, and the Two-Minute Fix

Both offers are real and both are worth it. They're also both designed so that the day the free period ends, you're a paying customer. Nothing sneaky about it, it's on both pages, but a student who forgets is a student with a charge on a card they don't check.

The fix takes two minutes on the day you sign up.

1. Open your phone's calendar.
2. Add a reminder called **"ChatGPT Plus free months end, decide"** about 3 and a half months from today. The free period is four monthly billing periods from your claim date, so a reminder at three and a half months gives you a week to decide.
3. Add a second reminder called **"Google AI Pro free year ends, decide"** eleven months from today.
4. When each one fires, ask yourself one question: did I use it this week? If yes, keep it. If no, cancel it in the app's subscription settings before the date.

You can also cancel the day you sign up if you want, but read the ChatGPT rule first: canceling ends your free months at the end of the current billing period. On the ChatGPT side, the reminder is the only way to get all four months and pay nothing.

PART 4 The 5 Prompts Every Student Should Have

Paid or free, this is what the plan is for. Five prompts that turn ChatGPT into a study partner instead of an answer machine. They all work in Gemini too. Anything in [square brackets] is a blank: type your real detail and delete the brackets.

1. Teach it back to me

The fastest way to find out whether you actually understand something.

PROMPT

Explain [topic] the way you'd explain it to someone in [course name] who's seen it once and didn't get it. Use one real example. Then ask me three questions, one at a time, to check I understood, and tell me what I got wrong.

2. Quiz me, one question at a time

For the night before. It gets harder as you go and won't hand you the answer.

PROMPT

Quiz me on [topic or chapter]. One question at a time. Start easy and get harder. Don't show me the answer until I've tried. After each answer, tell me if I'm right, explain why in two sentences, and move on. Keep score.

3. Turn my notes into a study sheet

Paste your notes, get one page you can actually review.

PROMPT

Here are my notes from [class]: [paste notes]. Turn them into a one-page study sheet: the key terms with one-line definitions, the five ideas that matter most and why, and what's most

likely to be on a test. Keep my wording where it's clear and fix it where it isn't.

4. Check my draft against the assignment

Not "write it for me." "Tell me where it's weak." Paste the assignment and your draft.

PROMPT

Here's the assignment: [paste the prompt or rubric]. Here's my draft: [paste]. Read them together. Tell me where I don't actually answer the question, where I repeat myself, where a claim needs evidence, and the three changes that would raise the grade most. Don't rewrite it for me. Show me where to fix it and I'll do it.

5. Plan my semester from the syllabus

Do this once in week one and the semester gets calmer.

PROMPT

Here's my syllabus: [paste]. Build a week-by-week plan with every due date. For each paper or project, tell me the week I should start, based on how big it is. For each exam, give me a two-week study plan. Flag any week where two big things land at once. Put it in a table I can copy into my calendar.

ONE HONEST NOTE

Every school has its own rules about AI, and some classes say no. Check your syllabus or ask. The five prompts above are built for learning the material, which is the use most schools are fine with. Use them that way and you'll never have to wonder.

PART 5 The Tell

When something doesn't go through, what you see tells you the fix.

What happened, and what to do

SheerID couldn't verify me

Use SheerID's support form, linked from the verification screen. They handle school listings and document reviews. A current class schedule usually does it.

SheerID verified me but ChatGPT still shows the regular plan

You're probably signed in to a different ChatGPT account than the one you verified on. Sign in to that one, go back to chatgpt.com/students/2026, and click Claim free offer again.

It says my subscription isn't eligible

You're paying for Plus through the App Store or Google Play. The offer only applies to Plus billed directly by ChatGPT. Cancel the store billing, let it lapse, then claim.

Google says I'm not eligible

The Google AI Pro offer is US college students only, one per account. Outside the US, look for the Google AI Plus student offer on the same page.

I got charged

The free period ended. Cancel in the subscription settings to stop the next one, and check the date you claimed to see which month the free period covered.

PART 6 What These Don't Include

They don't stack. Each offer is one per person, one time. Claiming an earlier student promotion doesn't stop you from claiming this one, but you can't claim this one twice.

They don't cover the top plans. ChatGPT's Pro plan and Google's bigger plans aren't part of this. Plus and AI Pro are plenty for school.

They don't verify by email alone. SheerID needs real enrollment: records, a school login, or a document. A school email address on its own isn't the check.

DO THIS FIRST

Open chatgpt.com/students/2026 in your browser right now and click Claim free offer. The whole thing takes about five minutes, and October 31 is closer than it looks. Then add the two calendar reminders from Part 3 before you close the tab. Google's offer can wait until the weekend, but do it before December 31. Then paste prompt 5 with your syllabus and watch the semester get organized.

FAQ Questions People Ask About the Student Offers

Straight answers

How do college students get ChatGPT Plus free?

Open chatgpt.com/students/2026 in a web browser, sign in to the ChatGPT account you want it on, verify your enrollment through SheerID, then finish activation and add a payment method. You get four free monthly billing periods of ChatGPT Plus, including ChatGPT Work. Claim it by October 31, 2026.

Is ChatGPT free for students?

The regular free plan is free for everyone. The student offer is four months of ChatGPT Plus at no charge for current college and graduate students at eligible US schools, if you claim it by October 31, 2026. After the four months it renews at full price unless you cancel.

How do I claim the ChatGPT student offer before October 31?

Go to chatgpt.com/students/2026 in a browser, not the phone app, sign in, and click Claim free offer. SheerID will check your enrollment through your school's records, your school login, or a document you upload. Come back to the page, finish activation, and add a card. You won't be charged during the four free months.

Is Gemini free for students?

Yes, for eligible US college students: twelve months of Google AI Pro, the paid Gemini plan, at no charge. You need a valid payment method at sign-up, and it renews at full price after the year unless you cancel. Claim by December 31, 2026. Students outside the US get a year of Google AI Plus instead.

What is SheerID verification for ChatGPT?

SheerID is the service OpenAI uses to confirm you're a current student. Depending on your school it checks enrollment records, asks you to sign in through your school's login, or asks for a document like a class schedule. The email you verify with can be different from the email on your ChatGPT account.

Do I need a school email for the ChatGPT student offer?

Your ChatGPT account can use any email. You'll need a school-issued email or your school login to verify with SheerID, and you have to do that while signed in to the ChatGPT account you want the offer on. OpenAI can't move the offer to a different account afterward.

What happens when the free months end?

Both offers turn into paid plans on their own. ChatGPT Plus renews at full price after the four free billing periods. Gemini's Google AI Pro plan renews at full price after twelve months. Put a reminder on your calendar a week before each one ends, and cancel if you don't want to pay.

SOURCES Where This Comes From

- OpenAI, the student offer page: the four months, the \$80 value, and the October 31 date. chatgpt.com/students/2026
- OpenAI Help Center, "ChatGPT Back to School offer for students": eligibility, the SheerID steps, billing rules, and the renewal terms. help.openai.com
- Google, "College students get 12 months of Google AI free," August 19, 2026: what's included and the student hub. blog.google
- Google's student page, where you claim the plan. gemini.google/students

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