Texell
QUARTERLY

July 2026

texell
CREDIT UNION

INSIDE:

Don’t Float That Loan!

First Time Homebuyer Guide

John Rossi
Chief Financial Officer

Welcome to the summer 2026 issue of Texell Quarterly, where we explore career planning tips for college graduates and those in high school preparing for their next steps after graduation. With Shark Week being held in July, our feature dives into types of predatory lending to avoid. As you prepare for your summer vacation, our Scam Watch section uncovers travel scams that could turn your dream trip into a nightmare.

Summer is a busy time for moving and buying a home, so we're sharing an overview of our First-time Homebuyer Guide. As we welcome our summer interns, the Meet the Team section discusses Texell's internship program and features three current full-time employees who first started out at Texell as interns.

We hope you find these articles helpful and entertaining, and we thank you for your membership.

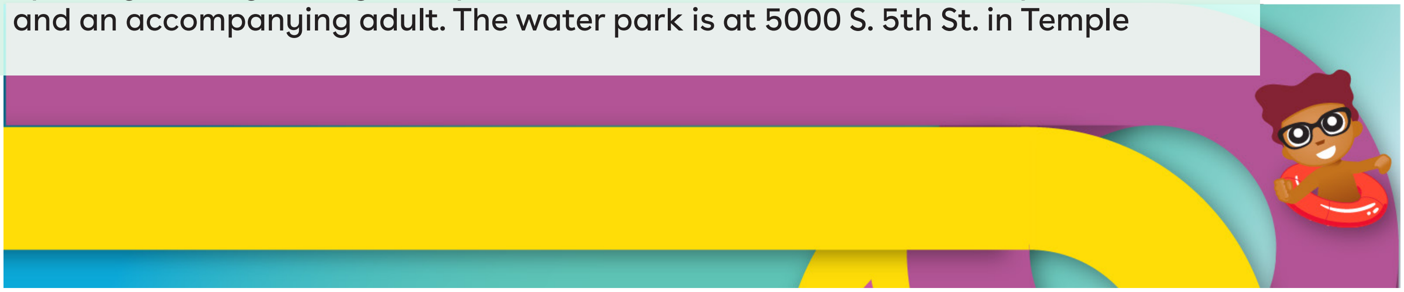
2026.800.Q3

Join us at these upcoming Texell events.

July 10 @ 7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Dollar Squad VIP Party, Lion's Junction Water Park

Splash your way through the park at this VIP event for our Dollar Squad members and an accompanying adult. The water park is at 5000 S. 5th St. in Temple



July 23 @ 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Social Security Seminar, Texell's HQ

Learn about when to apply, how to maximize your benefits, and how much you can expect to receive. Held in the 1948 Room at Texell's Headquarters at 7083 Members Parkway in Temple.

August 4 @ 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

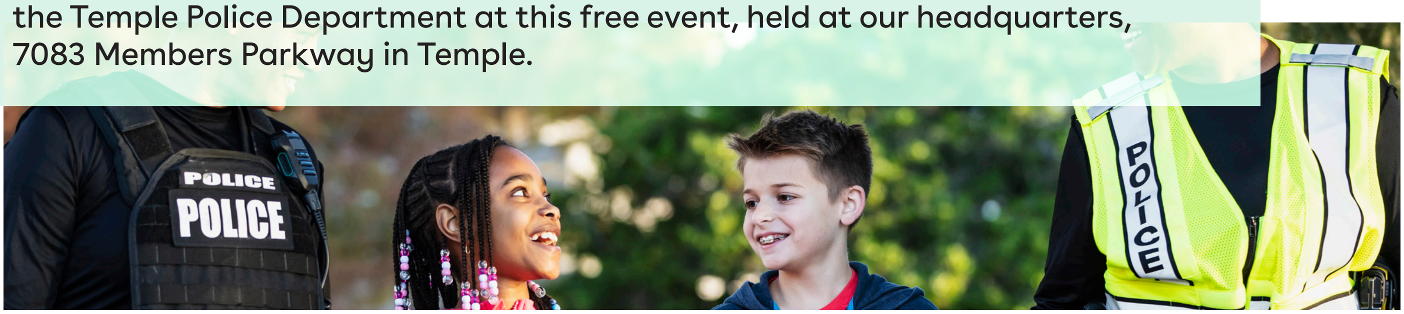
5 Critical Documents Every Texan Needs Seminar, Texell's HQ

Estate planning is less about you and more about those you love. Learn more in this seminar, held in the 1948 Room at Texell's Headquarters at 7083 Members Parkway in Temple.

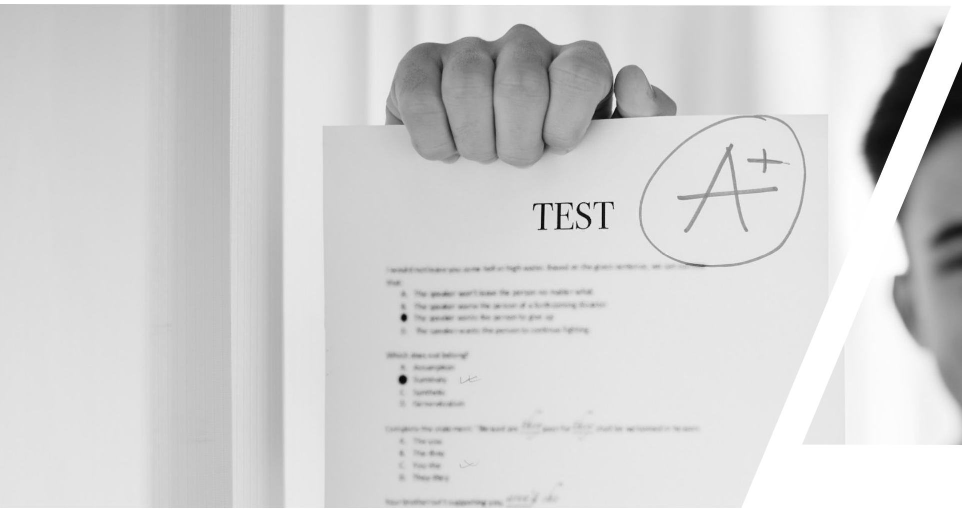
August 8 @ 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Kiddo Card, Texell's HQ

Bring your children for games, treats, and get a registered Kiddo Card from the Temple Police Department at this free event, held at our headquarters, 7083 Members Parkway in Temple.



September 19 @ 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Shred Day: Hewitt Branch



Making the Grade
without Breaking the Bank

By Kristen Reichert

The first steps after graduating from high school bring excitement, challenges, and often uncertainty. The traditional route of attending college provides a clear outline of expectations and deadlines. But what if you're not sure what you want to do next? Before accumulating student loan debt, take time to understand the differences between attending college and other alternatives that will help you reach your career goals.

Explore Your Interests

If you are unsure about your future, you're not alone. Americans change jobs an average of 12 times by age 55, and 40% of these changes occur during ages 18-24.[1] Technological advances require employees to update core skills every five years, and more than half of workers between the ages of 31 and 40 receive training outside of school during their careers.

These stats should bring a sigh of relief to high school seniors who are unsure of their career path. Start by identifying what excites you:

- What classes or activities did you enjoy most?
- Do you prefer hands-on work or classroom learning?
- Do you like working with people, technology, or tools?

If you're still not sure where to start, take free career interests and skills quizzes from mytexasfuture.org.

Before deciding what's next, ask yourself:

- Do I want to start earning money right away?
- How much debt am I willing or able to take on?
- What lifestyle do I want in 10 years?

Your answers can help guide you toward your best option, not just the most popular one.

[1] Number of Jobs, Labor Market Experience, Marital Status, and Health for Those Born 1957-1967 from a News Release by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

Take the Traditional College Route

Many students look forward to going to college after graduating. Keep key deadlines in mind to improve your chances for admission and scholarships. The following list includes anticipated dates for public Texas universities if you're starting in fall 2027[2]:

Applications Open: early August 2026

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Opens: October 1, 2026

Free College Application Week: Second week of October 2026 through ApplyTexas.org. This statewide initiative helps Texas residents apply to public colleges without paying an application fee.

Early Decision: Early-to-mid-November 2026

Priority Admission & Scholarship Deadline: December 1, 2026

Application Deadline: December 15, 2026

Regular Decision: January 15, 2027

If you're applying for financial aid, the earlier you fill out the FAFSA form, the more likely funds will be available. If you plan to attend in the fall of 2027, the FAFSA application opens in October 2026 with a deadline of January 15 or March 1, 2027, depending on the college. Learn more about financial aid at studentaid.gov or by visiting your college's financial aid office.

Once you receive financial aid, create a budget to make sure your funds don't run out before the semester or school year ends.

List expenses, starting with the necessities: tuition and fees, textbooks and supplies, housing, food, and transportation. After covering necessities, you can spend any leftover money on fun items or activities, but track your "want" expenses closely. Review your expenses often so that you're within your budget.

[2] Dates vary based on location. Visit your college or university of interest for accurate deadlines.

Search for Alternatives to College

Not sure about college or taking on student loan debt? Find part-time or entry-level jobs and work while saving up for college when you're ready. Jump-start your career by finding a job that provides training, like retail, food service, administrative assistant, or customer service. Employers in trade skills often offer on-the-job training. Common alternatives to college include:

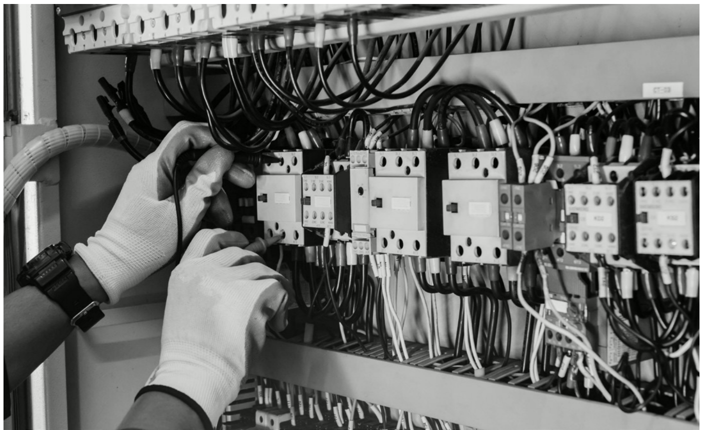
Associate degree – Two-year degree programs offer many opportunities in healthcare, Information Technology (IT), engineering, and business administration.

Vocational or trade schools – For those who enjoy hands-on work, trade schools provide training for electricians, HVAC technicians, auto mechanics, welders, plumbers, carpentry, and masonry.

Certificate program – Similar to an associate degree, these programs offer specialized training for specific tasks, often used in healthcare, IT, or trade skills.

Apprenticeships – Some high-demand industries provide paid on-the-job training, including apprenticeships in construction, skilled trades, healthcare, IT, and manufacturing.

Military Service – Serve your country and pay for college or training for your career after you're out of the military with the GI Bill.



Compare the costs

Not all education paths cost the same:

Path	Cost	Benefits
4-Year Degree	$$$$	Degree, Broader Career Options
Community College	$$	Transferable Credits
Trade School	$-$$	Faster entry into the workforce
Apprenticeship	$	Earn while you learn a skill

Choosing a lower-cost option or delaying college can help you avoid unnecessary student debt.

Whichever path you choose after graduation, establishing responsible money management skills is key. Pay attention to your spending and saving habits and create a budget. There's no one-size fits all path after high school. Whether you choose college, a trade, or another route, what matters most is making a decision that aligns with your goals and financial situation. For more tips about the first steps of financial independence, check out I've Got My First Job! Now What?

DON'T FLOAT THAT LOAN

Avoid Loan Sharks & Predatory Lending

By Kristen Reichert

When you need money fast, you're vulnerable to risky financial moves. Charting a course through the sea of lending options often leaves you feeling like you're in over your head. Predatory lending uses deceptive tactics like hidden fees and misleading loan terms to exploit borrowers, especially when they're most vulnerable and need money fast. Before you sign a loan or other agreement, make sure it's safe to go in the water by being aware of these types of predatory lending.

Loan Sharks

The term "loan shark" dates back to the late 1800s, where unlicensed lenders exploited high-risk borrowers with high-interest loans. Loan sharks operate illegally, offering short-term loans funded by their personal business or organization. They don't require a credit check, and they put borrowers at serious financial and physical risk. Because they don't use contracts and cannot use the legal system to collect debts, loan sharks often threaten violence or blackmail to enforce repayment. And they can demand repayment at any time. If you're imagining a mob movie where Paulie threatens to break your legs or sleep with the fish if you don't pay up, then you've got the picture.

Payday Loans

Payday lenders operate legally and offer products that appear comparable to traditional loans, but they trap the borrower in a cycle of debt. Targeting those with little or no credit, lenders "float a loan" so that borrowers can cover a bill or payment that's due before their next paycheck. Unfortunately, with urgency to get funds fast, the borrower doesn't read the fine print carefully. Payday loans charge higher interest rates and fees than traditional loans, with an average Annual Percentage Rate (APR) up to 400%.

Texas allows payday lenders to operate as Credit Access Businesses (CABs), which allows them to bypass usury laws that cap interest rates. Instead, payday lenders may charge unlimited fees, with an APR averaging 500-660%.[1]

Payday loans lead to a cycle of debt, as borrowers often extend the loan multiple times, paying much more in fees than they originally borrowed. In one study, over 80% of borrowers extend or take out another payday loan within 14 days.[2]

How do payday loans work?

1. Borrower gets a payday loan for $500.

2. Lender charges $15 per $100 borrowed, or $575 total, due in 14 days. If repeated throughout a year, the APR is 391%.[3]

3. Borrower can't pay the loan in 14 days, so they extend the loan for another 14 days with an additional $75 in fees. The total is now $650.

4. Borrower still can't pay, so they extend the loan again for 14 days, totaling $225 in fees. The total loan amount is $725.

[1] Red Alert Rates: Annual Percentage Rates on $400, Single-Payment Payday Loans in the United States by Charla Rios, Deputy Director of Research from the Center for Responsible Lending

[2] CFPB Data Point: Payday Lending by the CFPB Office of Research.

[3] The Truth About Payday Loans from blog.texell.org.

Car Title Loans

Car title loans are another type of predatory lending that uses your car as collateral for a loan. Lenders require borrowers to hand over the title and keys to their car for a loan that's a percentage of the car's value. If the borrower doesn't pay or extend the loan by the due date of 15 or 30 days, the lender repossesses, or takes ownership, of the car. The lender may charge other fees or add-ons, including processing, loan origination, road service plans, or repossession fees. Some lenders also insist on installing GPS and starter interrupt devices to locate the vehicle and disable ignition remotely if the borrower defaults on the loan. About 20% of borrowers with car title loans have their vehicles repossessed[4], which cuts off easy transportation to their job. Like payday loans, Texas allows car title lenders to operate as CABs, so APRs range from 200 to 400%. Texas law limits the loan amount to either 70% of the vehicle's value or 3% of the borrower's gross annual income, whichever is less.

Other types of predatory financing

Besides payday and car title loans, other businesses offer quick cash in ways that are predatory and target low-income individuals. For those who don't have a checking account, check-cashing services provide quick access to cash without waiting for a check to clear. However, these businesses charge fees from 1% to 4% of the check amount in addition to a transaction fee. Check-cashing services often operate alongside payday lenders, preying on those who need immediate access to funds for rent, utilities, and other bills.

Pawn shops provide quick loans without a credit check, using personal property as collateral. While these shops operate legally, the loans offered include high interest rates and additional fees for insurance or storage. In Texas, interest rates range from 180% APR to 240% APR for loans less than $1,800.[5] Pawn shops usually offer a loan that's much less than the object's value. Borrowers who do not repay the loan within the 30-day grace period after the due date forfeit their items.

Rent-to-own shops also operate legally by allowing customers to purchase furniture, appliances, or other merchandise on an installment plan. However, these plans also carry high interest rates that cost the consumer two to three times as much as if they had paid upfront. A credit check is not required, but if you miss a payment or two, the store repossesses the item without refunding payments already made.

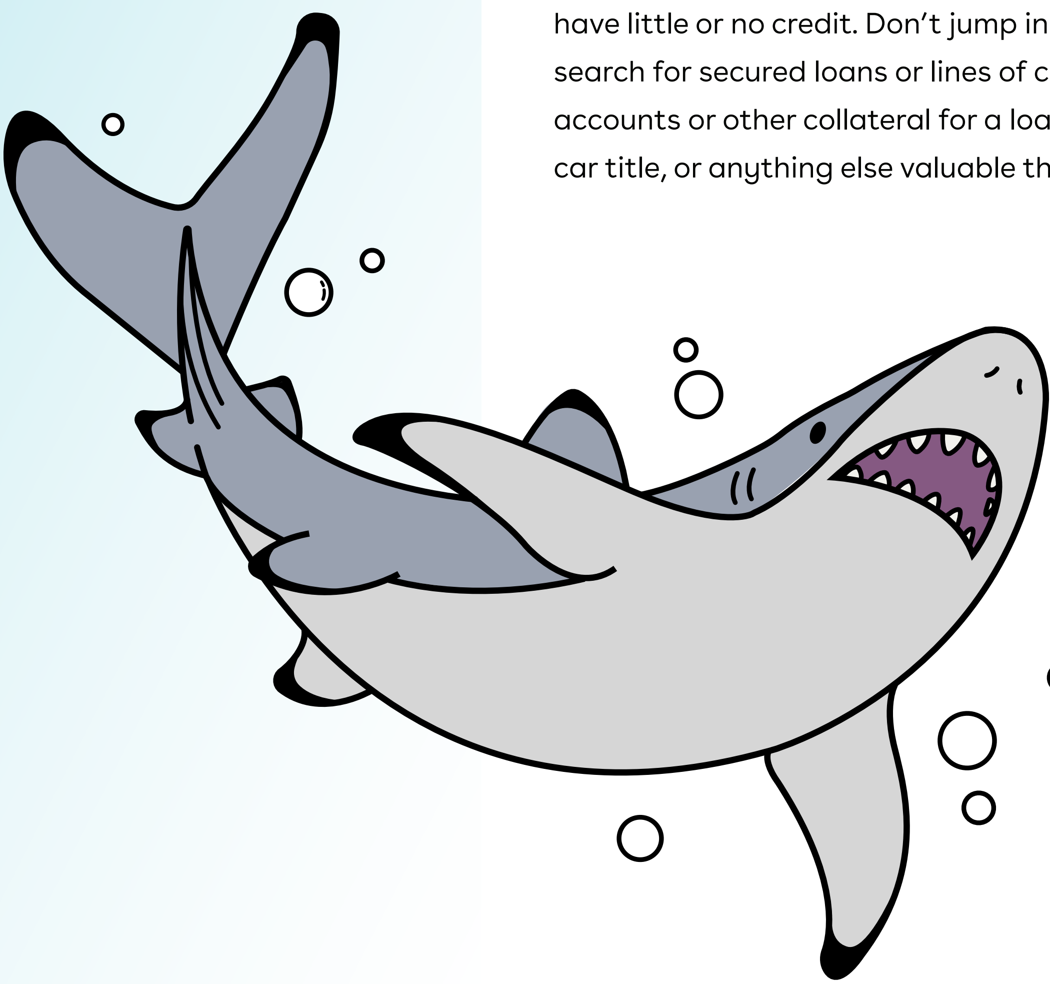
[4] CFPB Finds One-in-Five Auto Title Loan Borrowers Have Vehicle Seized for Failing to Repay Debt from ConsumerFinance.gov.

[5] Texas Pawnshop Rate Chart from the Texas Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner.

How to avoid predatory lending

It seems easy to avoid physical storefronts of predatory lenders with locations in low-income neighborhoods, flashy signs, and advertising. However, more of these businesses are operating online with clever ads targeting anyone searching for ways to pay bills or get cash quickly. As you scroll, be aware of offers for cash without a credit check. Look for keywords that push urgency, like "act now" or "instant approval." Stay clear of websites with URLs that begin with http:// instead of https://. The "s" is the differentiator that informs you that the site is "secure". Pay attention to the interest rates and upfront fees, and search for more details about the business, including its physical location and license information.

Predatory lenders operate on urgency, knowing that those who are borrowing money need funds fast and usually have little or no credit. Don't jump in the water! Instead, search for secured loans or lines of credit that use savings accounts or other collateral for a loan—not your paycheck, car title, or anything else valuable that you own.



Let's Go!
Building Your Career

By Kristen Reichert

You've got your degree in hand, and you're ready to start your first job. Congrats! Now, how do launch your career? Let's break down the steps from job searching to landing your first job.

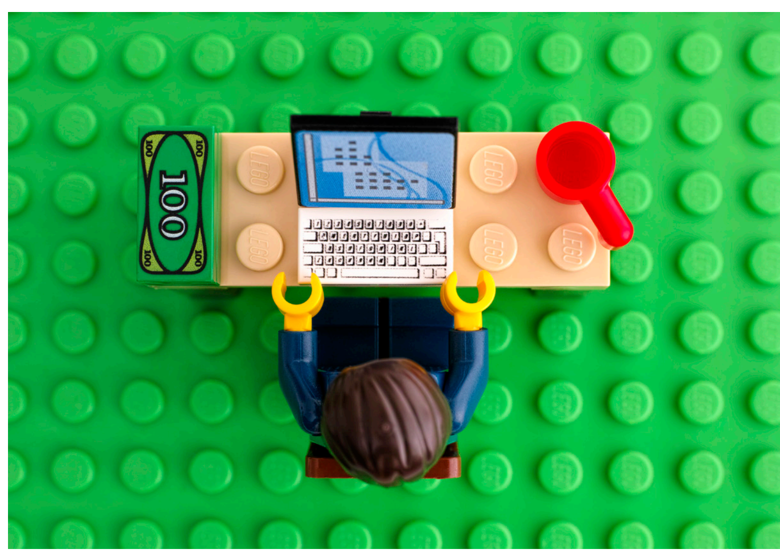
1. Job searching

Before you dive into job boards, start with a checklist of what you're looking for in a job or company. Think beyond job title and try to pinpoint the company culture qualities and opportunities that will help you find fulfillment and growth in your career. For instance, if you want to continue your education, look for companies that offer tuition reimbursement programs or continuing education opportunities.

After defining your ideal job and career objectives, set up a profile on professional networking sites such as Handshake, LinkedIn, ZipRecruiter, or Indeed. Set alerts for job titles that match your degree and interests. Create an online portfolio that includes past projects and volunteer work. Don't be shy of "experience required" listed in the job description, as internships and long-term projects show your work ethic and ability to see a project through over several weeks or months. Search for job fairs and networking events, especially offered through your school or alumni network. Be aware of [employment scams] – if something feels off and a job sounds too good to be true, it might be. Stick to trusted websites when searching for a job.

2. Prepping your resume

Your resume is your first impression, so make it count. Start with a comprehensive resume that includes your objective or summary, education, all past work and volunteer experiences, training certificates, a comprehensive list of skills, and awards or achievements. While ready-made online resumes provide a starting point, update the format to make it personalized and authentic. Review each job description before applying and tailor your resume with keywords that match the requirements. Companies use an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) that scans and ranks job applications based on how closely they match the requirements. Even if you have the qualifications, ATS might pass over your resume if it doesn't contain enough keywords.



3. Build your network

"It's not what you know, it's who you know." This common phrase shows why it's important to make connections. Your network goes beyond your fellow alumni and those you've worked with including people you know from your personal life. Find people working in your areas of interest and ask for informal chats to gather advice. Showing interest and a natural curiosity appeals to anyone who has been working for some time, and they're more likely to remember you when they have an open position that you can fill.

4. Land the interview

The most successful interview starts well before the event by building soft skills, including clear communication, a strong work ethic, and collaboration. References praising your teamwork abilities can make you more appealing toward a potential employer. Before your interview, research the company and job expectations, and be ready with questions about their company's culture. Set yourself apart by responding in a thoughtful and authentic manner so that the potential employer gets an idea of how you might fit within the company. It's a two-way interview process, so ensure that the company suits your career goals as well. When the interview is over, follow up with a thank-you note within 24 hours. If you're offered the job, ask questions about salary, benefits, and other factors that might affect your work-life balance. Will the employer expect you to work outside of traditional office hours? If so, how often? Is traveling a requirement? If so, how often? How will you receive reimbursement for travel expenses? What are the opportunities for growth? It's best to uncover any deal-breakers before you start the job search process again.

5. Starting your first job

It's an exciting achievement to start your first "real" job, and it's easy to let your finances get carried away. Before you splurge on any major expenses, follow these tips:

Create a budget. Track your income, expenses, and savings goals, and don't forget to set up direct deposit for your paycheck.

Build an emergency fund. Start small with a $1,000 emergency cushion with the goal of building an emergency savings account to cover three to six months of living expenses.

Take advantage of benefits. Start your retirement fund as early as possible and meet any contribution amount your employer matches to maximize growth.

For more insight and tips, listen to "Building Your Career" on the *Worth a Listen* podcast. Your career isn't something you find, it is something you build. So be proactive, stay curious, build relationships, and take steps forward that move you closer to your goals.

First-time Homebuyer Guide
from Texell Home Loans

Owning a home is possible[1], and Texell's Home Loan Heroes guide you through the process from start to finish.

Step 1 – Get expert advice.

Working with an experienced loan officer early can help you avoid surprises and understand what you can truly afford. Texell's Mortgage Loan Officers simplify the process with professional advice on the loan application, preapproval, interest rate trends, closing costs estimates, down payment options, and programs for first-time homebuyers.

Step 2 – Get pre-approved.

To get pre-approved you'll need to gather key financial documents:

- **Income statements**:
  Last two months' paycheck stubs.
- **Bank statements:**
  Last two months' financial statements.
- **Personal and business tax returns:**
  Last two years.
- **W-2s/1099s**:
  Last two years.

Apply and get a customized pre-approval letter. Stay in contact with your mortgage loan officer, provide any other requested documents, and continue making payments on current housing and other debts. During this stage, don't apply for new credit, make any major purchases or withdrawals, or make any large deposits.

Step 3 – Find your home & submit an offer.

This is where the process gets exciting! Make a wish list of "must-haves" and "nice-to-haves" to find a home within your budget. Stay patient and look at several homes before you submit an offer. Make sure your offer includes your desired price, earnest money deposit, desired closing date, and deadline for the seller to respond.

Step 4 – Close the deal.

During this phase, Texell's Mortgage Team issues your Initial Disclosure Package, answers questions, and helps you apply for final underwriting. It's also recommended to order an appraisal and home inspection before signing paperwork at closing.

[1] With approved credit. The First-time Homebuyer program is available for single family residence where at least one of the homebuyers is a first-time homeowner, and homebuyer education is required. Must have a minimum 680 credit score and loan amount cannot exceed $500,000. Other restrictions may apply.

Step 5 – Homeownership day arrives.

This is the day you become a homeowner! Before closing, review the final closing disclosure which includes final transaction fees and terms. On closing day, you'll finalize the purchase contract and provide closing funds to the title company with either a cashier's check or wire transfer.

Step 6 – Welcome home.

Congratulations on your new home! To manage your mortgage, set up monthly payments and follow the new home to-do list:

- Change the locks and set up safety precautions for kids and pets.
- Deep clean and test smoke detectors and security systems.
- Transfer utilities and submit a change-of-address form.

First-time Homebuyer Loans

Texell Home Loans helps you achieve homeownership with:

- Lower monthly payments with no mortgage insurance.[1]
- Loan amounts up to $500,000.
- Down payment as little as 3%[2].
- Gift funds accepted for down payment or closing costs.[3]

Ready to take the first step toward homeownership? Visit TexellHomeLoans.com or call or text 254.774.5104 to get started.

[2] If loan-to-value is greater than 80%, borrowers must contribute at least 3% verified personal funds.

[3] Gift funds may fund all or part of the down payment or closing costs.

Relax, What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

Vacation Scams By Kristen Reichert

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in scams allows criminals to create more realistic fraud attacks. If not careful, the most experienced traveler risks falling for AI-generated websites impersonating real businesses or AI voice cloning real people. As you pack your bags for your next vacation, be aware of these common travel scams and how to avoid them.

Fake travel agents or websites

AI tools make it easy to set up travel agent websites or booking websites that appear identical to real sites like Expedia, Orbitz, or Travelocity. They might even buy online ads offering great deals or use AI-generated reviews to sound more convincing. Look closely at the URL, since scammers often use "typo-squatting" to fool victims, like Airbnnb.com instead of Airbnb.com. Scammers also send phishing emails with fake travel confirmation or cancellation links, hoping to fool victims into clicking the link and sharing login credentials. To avoid falling for fake travel sites, research the company and look at reviews before booking. Review the confirmation email closely and compare the address and contact information with the company's website. Be cautious of any sites that ask for prepayment to get a deal. Most legitimate sites only ask for a credit card to hold the reservation but won't charge until you arrive for your stay.

Fraudulent Airbnb or Vrbo listings

Similar to fake travel websites, scammers use AI tools to list a home or property on Airbnb or Vrbo using images gathered online to create fake listings or make real listing look far better than they really are. The traveler arrives at the destination, only to find it doesn't exist.

Or worse, the real property owner is not aware that their home has been listed on a rental site, creating a dangerous situation for all involved. Be cautious of listings that ask to move the conversation to a different platform or request payment in another way, like PayPal or Venmo. Some scammers with legitimate listings use AI-generated images to claim damage to the furniture or property so that they can charge additional fees. Read reviews carefully, talk to the property owner, and ask for more photos from different angles or a live walkthrough to verify that it's legitimate.

AI chatbots or voice cloning scams

Criminals use these tools to send urgent messages related to travel bookings, like credit card failure with a demand for an immediate payment update. Voice cloning impersonates customer service agents to persuade the victim to share account information. Scammers also use voice cloning to sound like a family member or friend in need of immediate cash while traveling. These AI-powered bots often use personal details scraped from data breaches to gain credibility. Never click on links in messages that you weren't expecting. Instead, access contact information for customer service through the company's website or app.

Public Wi-Fi and charging station scams

Known as "juicing" or "juice jacking," scammers compromise public USB charging stations in airports, hotels, or train stations and hack into phones or other devices. Unsecured Wi-Fi networks in public places pose the same threat, providing access to passwords, photos, financial account information, and other sensitive data. Criminals also install tracking software or malware that further compromises your device. Use your own charging cable and adapter or bring a USB data blocker or portable power bank when traveling to avoid this trap.

"Quishing," or QR code scams

Scammers place fake QR codes on menus, parking meters, or on tourism signs that lead to fake websites impersonating legitimate businesses. Victims scan the codes and submit payment or personal information. Examine the code closely and don't scan if it looks like a sticker. Avoid using third-party QR readers and use your phone's camera instead to preview the link for typos or misspellings. Use official websites or apps to pay for parking and other services.

Travel scams are designed to catch you off guard, especially when you are jet lagged, distracted, or navigating unfamiliar surroundings. A little caution goes a long way, so stay alert and think before you act to protect yourself from these scams.

Meet the Team

Texell's Intern Program

Learn what it's like to work at Texell in our Meet the Team series. This issue highlights the intern program at Texell as we welcome the 2026 summer interns.

Pictured (left to right): Alex Ortiz (Videographer/Animator); Jacob Svare (Finance Analyst); Rawlei Balthrop (Loss Mitigation Paralegal)

Since 2021, an average of six interns join the team each summer to work in various departments. While the program is available to all departments, Marketing, Finance, and Information Technology (IT) typically use the program the most. Human Resource Manager Chris Haynie said the program gives interns real-world working experience that they can use in future employment opportunities, and the credit union also benefits from the interns.

"Texell benefits from gaining diversity of thought with each intern that brings a fresh look at corporate issues," said Chris. That mutual benefit has already paid off, and a few interns turned their opportunities into full-time employment at Texell because of the value they brought to their teams.

Current staff members, Rawlei Balthrop and Jacob Svare joined as interns in the summer of 2023, and Alex Ortiz interned the following summer in 2024. Although they worked in vastly different departments, Compliance, Accounting, and Marketing, respectively, they shared some similar experiences.

During her internship, Rawlei helped with auditing the Belton branch and shared their excitement when they received a perfect score. As the videographer intern, Alex enjoyed compiling an equipment list and design for the studio in the new headquarters. Besides his internship in Accounting, Jacob enjoyed learning about Texell's culture, like volunteering for local nonprofit organizations through Texell Serves.

When offered a full-time position, Jacob had duties in both Accounting and Finance. Even though both departments were fully staffed, management created a hybrid position to provide him with an employment opportunity. Rawlei discussed learning about the banking side of legal work and how her confidence has grown each time she represents Texell at court hearings. Alex talked about his excitement in seeing the studio come to life for video production, including an internal series for employees called This Week @ Texell and launching a financial podcast, Worth a Listen.

For the incoming interns, Rawlei, Jacob, and Alex shared some advice:
"You want to leave a lasting impact and be missed by that team that you were a part of," said Alex. "You don't want to go in with the mentality of 'I'm only here for ten weeks.'"

"Make as many connections as you can, not just within your internship at Texell, but also while you're in school," said Rawlei. "You will potentially need those connections later on and you can learn from the people who are here, even if they're not in your department."

"Be professional and treat it like it's an actual job," said Jacob. "Think about what you did here and how you can apply it to a resume and carry it forward."

The Texell interns for summer 2026 will work in a variety of departments, including IT, Legal, Accounting, and Marketing. If you're interested in joining a "Best Credit Union to Work For[1]," check out our current openings at Texell.org/Careers.

Written by Kristen Reichert

[1] Recognized as one of the Best Credit Unions to Work For in the nation by American Banker.

texell
CREDIT UNION

Get $5K Today

For less than $96/mo.[1]

For a limited time, Texell is offering a $5,000 loan Personal Loan with low payments of under $96[1] per month.

[1] With approved credit. Rates subject to change at any time. Monthly payment examples based on a credit score of 740 or higher, $5,000 borrowed at 11.49% APR for 75 months, and includes discounts for the purchase of Credit Life protection. Monthly payment per $1,000 borrowed is $19.15. Total cost of a $5,000 loan protected with Credit Life is $7,281.36. Individual monthly payment, rate, and repayment terms will vary.

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