

Applying for Financial Aid: Step-by-Step Instructions on Completing the FAFSA



To be eligible for Federal Student Aid, you must...

- Be a United States citizen or eligible non-citizen, with a valid Social Security number
- Have a high school diploma, GED or equivalent homeschool credential, or pass an approved “ability to benefit” test
- Enroll as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program approved by the U.S. Department of Education
- Register (or have registered) for Selective Service (applies to males between the ages of 18 to 25)

Documents You Will Need to Complete the FAFSA

- Social Security number
- Driver's license
- W-2 forms and other records of money earned
- Federal income tax returns
 - IRS Form 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ, 1040 Telefile, foreign tax return
- Untaxed income records
 - Social Security, temporary assistance to needy families, welfare or veteran's benefit records
- Current bank statements
- Current business and investment mortgage information
- Business and farm records
- Records of stocks, bonds, and other investments

FAFSA on the Web

- File the FAFSA electronically at: www.fafsa.ed.gov
- Processed more quickly than the paper version
- Over 90% of the FAFSA applications are submitted online

When Filling Out the FAFSA Form (Paper Copy)....

- Use black ink only
- Amounts should be rounded to the nearest whole dollar
- Dates: MM-DD-YY format
- Print clearly in CAPITAL LETTERS and skip one space between words
- Fill in ovals completely
- Do not leave blanks unless directed by instructions

When to Apply...

- Apply for financial aid no earlier than the senior year in high school
- The FAFSA filing period begins October 1st
 - Some schools have priority filing deadlines as early as February 1st (check with the colleges where you are applying for admission)
 - Students can still complete the FAFSA past the priority filing date, but may miss out on major aid programs
- You do not have to be admitted to a college to apply for financial aid
- For parents of younger students who want to get an idea of what college will cost:
 - Fill out the FAFSA at any time and you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) with your Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
 - This EFC would only be valid for that year- if your income and/or family situation is different when your student is ready to apply for financial aid, the EFC might look different

FAFSA TIPS

Section 1: Student Information

- Name must be written exactly as it appears on your Social Security card- do not use any nicknames
- Enter your permanent mailing address
- Social Security number will be matched with Social Security Administration (SSA)
 - Contact the SSA to obtain your SSN
 - 800-772-1213 or www.ssa.gov
- Naturalized citizens: Make sure SSA has your naturalization on file

FAFSA TIPS

Section 1: Student Information

- Enter date of birth, phone number, and driver's license number (if any) and state
- Student email address
 - You will receive your FAFSA information through a secure link on the internet, sent to the email address provided
 - Make sure your email address does not change
 - Read your email every day
- If (a) "U.S. Citizen," status will be confirmed by SSA match
- If (b) "eligible non-citizen," student must provide the Alien Registration Number (ARN)
- If (c) "not citizen or eligible citizen," student will not qualify for any type of aid

FAFSA TIPS

Section 1: Student Information

- **Marital Status**
 - Enter your marital status as of the date you sign the FAFSA
 - If single or never married, leave blank
- **State of legal residence**
 - You will need to find out what constitutes legal residency in your state
 - It is important to answer these questions, since some states provide more grants to its legal residents
- **Male students between the ages of 18 to 25 can automatically register for Selective Service by filling in the “Yes” oval**
 - Most male students must register with the Selective Service to receive federal student aid

FAFSA TIPS

Section 1: Student Information

- College Degree/Certificate
 - Choose the description that best fits the first degree objective described on page 2
- Grade Level
 - Choose the appropriate description
- Graduating from High School
 - You must have a high school diploma or GED before you begin college
 - Home schooling may fulfill the requirement
- First Bachelor's Degree
 - The answer is "NO" if the student is a senior in high school

FAFSA TIPS

Section 1: Student Information

- Other Types of Student Financial Aid
 - You can decline any loans once aid is awarded
 - By leaving some boxes unchecked, you may limit your financial aid options
- Work-study may give you the opportunity to get an on- or off- campus job at your school, if eligible
- Parents' Education
 - Indicate parents' highest level of completed education
- Have you ever been convicted of possessing or selling illegal drugs?
 - Financial aid will not be awarded if question is left blank
 - The questions only pertains if the applicant was convicted of possessing or selling illegal drugs

FAFSA TIPS

Section 2: Student Dependency Status

- Student income and assets must be completed if student worked, even if part-time
- Student can obtain information from his/her W-2 or IRS 1040 forms
- If eligible for veterans' education benefits, student must report his/her expected monthly benefit

FAFSA TIPS

What is a “Parent” (for Financial Aid Purposes)?

- Considered a parent:
 - Biological parent(s)
 - Adoptive parent(s)
 - Stepparent
 - Common-law marriage that is recognized by the state
- Not considered a parent:
 - Foster parent(s)
 - Legal guardian(s)

FAFSA TIPS

Dependent vs. Independent Student Classifications

- **Dependent Student**

- The student must have contact with his/her biological parent, adoptive parent, or stepparent

- **Independent Student**

- The student must be an orphan or ward of the court (until age 18)
- The student is 24 or older
- If independent, student needs to contact that college they are planning to attend to obtain a dependency override as soon as possible

FAFSA TIPS

Section 3: Parental Information

- Parent(s) Marital Status - enter the status as of the date the FAFSA application is signed
- Father's or Stepfather's SSN and Last Name, and Date of Birth
- Mother's or Stepmother's SSN and Last Name
- The financial information must be for the parent(s) who are completing the FAFSA form
- If student does not provide the SSN of his/her parent(s) the FAFSA will be rejected
- If parents are divorced or separated:
 - Provide information of the parent the student lived with most over the last 12 months
 - Provide information of the parent that provided most of the student's support

FAFSA TIPS

Section 3: Parental Information

- Include student, parent(s), and brothers/sisters living in the same home
- Include other people if they now live with the student's parents and if the parents currently provide more than half of the person's financial support
- Number in college
 - Write down the number of people in the household who will be college students
 - Include the student applicant
 - Do not include parent(s)
- Parents' legal residence
 - Enter parents' state of legal resident

FAFSA TIPS

Section 3: Parental Information

- Information needs to be provided if parent(s) worked
- Parents can fill out most of this section by using the information from their 1040 IRS income tax return
 - You do not need to have filed the 1040 to complete the FAFSA
- Parents also need to answer the question to the worksheet A, B, and C - the worksheets can also be completed by using the 1040 IRS income tax return

FAFSA TIPS

Section 4: Student Finances

- Answer this question only if student was not required to report parental information
 - Independent student answers this question
 - Include student and spouse
 - Student's children
 - Other people if they now live with the student and are currently providing more than half of their support
- Student number in college
 - Write in the number of people who will be college students

FAFSA TIPS

Section 5: Schools to Receive Information

- List up to 6 colleges
- Title IV school codes available from the Financial Aid office
- Select the housing plan that best describes where the student expected to live while attending that particular college
- Enrollment status
 - If you're not sure, report full-time

FAFSA TIPS

Signature Section

- If filing electronically, don't forget the signature page or e-signature (FSA ID)
 - The FSA ID required for your electronic signature
 - Parents have to apply for their own FSA ID
- If completed by a dependent student, the student and one parent must sign
- If filed by an independent student, only the student must sign

What Happens After You Apply?

- The federal FAFSA processor sends a Student Aid Report (SAR) to the student
- The federal processor sends a SAR to the colleges and universities you specified
- Colleges use the information from the SAR to award financial aid in the form of grants, loans, scholarships, or work-study
- Colleges send students preliminary or official financial aid offer letters