Commonly Asked Questions about FAFSA

What will I need to fill out the FAFSA?

To complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), you will need:

- Your Social Security Number
- Your Alien Registration Number (if you are not a U.S. citizen)
- Your federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned. (**Note:** You may be able to transfer your federal tax return information into your FAFSA using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.)
- Bank statements and records of investments (if applicable)
- Records of untaxed income (if applicable)
- An FSA ID to sign electronically.

If you are a dependent student, then you will also need most of the above information for your parent(s).

How long will it take to fill out the FAFSA?

It takes most people less than an hour to complete and submit a new *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA). This includes gathering any documents or data needed, completing and reviewing the application, and reading the important information on the "Confirmation" page you'll receive after you sign and submit your FAFSA.
Independent students who are not required to provide parental information or students who submitted a FAFSA last year and who are doing a Renewal FAFSA take even less time on average.

Which FAFSA do I need to fill out?

If you are applying for financial aid for the 2019-2020 school year, you should file a 2019-2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

If you are applying for financial aid for the 2018-2019 school year, you should file a 2018-2019 FAFSA.

If you plan to attend summer classes, you should contact your college's financial aid office to determine which application they accept for summer sessions.

How can my parent fill out the FAFSA if they can't use my FSA ID?

This video helps your parent work on your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) without using your FSA ID.

The key to completing a FAFSA with your parent when you aren't together is something called the **Save Key**. The Save Key is a short, temporary password you can give someone when it is time for them to work on your FAFSA. Here's how it works:

1. Start a FAFSA at fafsa.gov. Click on **Start Here**.

2. On the "Login" page, you can start a FAFSA with your FSA ID (on the left) or your parent can start it with your name, Social Security Number and date of birth (on the right).

3. Whoever starts the FAFSA will be prompted to create a Save Key. Make a note of it.

4. Whenever the first person is done with their part, save the FAFSA and close out of it.

5. Give the other person the Save Key. Then that person can use the Save Key to get into the partially completed FAFSA and do his or her part. A parent can get in by entering your (the student's) identifiers on the right side of the "Login" screen and never needs to use your FSA ID.

6. When everyone is done with their parts of the FAFSA, be sure to click **Submit My FAFSA Now** at the bottom of the "Signature Status" page. You are not done until you see the "Confirmation" page, which you should read and save for your records. If your parent has another child in school, there is a link on the "Confirmation" page to start a new FAFSA for that child, allowing your parent to transfer much of their information and save time.

It is very important that you and your parent create and use your own FSA IDs. The FSA ID acts as a legal signature and should not be shared. Letting someone else create your FSA ID is not allowed and can create problems and delays with your financial aid. For more information or to create your own FSA ID, go to StudentAid.gov/fsaid.

If your parent does not have a Social Security Number, he or she will not be able to get an FSA ID. In that case your parent will print, sign, and mail in a paper signature page.

Why do I have to submit my 2017 tax and income information on my 2019–20 FAFSA form?

The 2019–20 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) form asks for 2017 income and tax information.

This is advantageous for most students and their families because it

- allows for immediate use of the IRS Data Retrieval Tool to transfer financial information for eligible applicants,
- eliminates estimating income and tax information before taxes are filed,
- reduces the need to come back and update a FAFSA form after filing taxes, and
- enables submitting a FAFSA form as early as October of the year before attending school.

If your 2017 financial situation no longer reflects your current situation, speak with the financial aid office of the school that you plan to attend after submitting your FAFSA form.

What if I forgot my FSA ID username and password?

If you have an FSA ID but do not remember your username, click Forgot Username.

If you have an FSA ID but do not remember your password, click Forgot Password.

Note: The password must be between 8 to 30 characters long. You can use any combination of numbers, uppercase and lowercase letters, and/or special characters.

How do I add a college?

While completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), you must list at least one college to receive your information.

To add colleges after you have already submitted your FAFSA, click the **Log In** button on the home page and log into *FAFSA on the Web*. Click **Make FAFSA Corrections**, and then navigate to the "School Selection" page.

To search for a college that you want to receive your information, select the state in which the college is located, then enter the city and/or school name and click **Search**. We will search our database and display your results in order by best match. You can re-sort the list in alphabetical order by School Name.

From the Search Results, you can select up to ten colleges to add to your list of Selected Schools. You can select an individual college, or you can press the **Ctrl** button on your keyboard and select multiple colleges. After you have selected the college(s), click the **ADD>>** button to add the college(s) to your list of Selected Schools.

How do I sign my FAFSA?

If you have an FSA ID, then you should use your FSA ID to sign your application electronically. When you sign your application electronically using your FSA ID, your application is processed within 3-5 days.

To sign your application electronically, click the **Log In** button on the *FAFSA on the Web* home page to log in, and then click the **Provide Signatures**button.

If you do not already have an FSA ID, you can create an FSA ID.

Alternatively, you can choose one of the following options:

- Print a signature page, sign it, and mail it to the address on the page. Your application will be processed once your signature is received.

- Submit your FAFSA without signatures. Your application will be partially processed without signatures, and you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) within 3-5 days. In order for your FAFSA to fully process, you'll need to return later to sign electronically.

How can my parents and I fill out a FAFSA if we live apart from each other?

This video helps your parent work on your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) without using your FSA ID.

The key to completing a FAFSA with your parent when you aren't together is something called the **Save Key**. The Save Key is a short, temporary password you can give someone when it is time for them to work on your FAFSA. Here's how it works:

1. Start a FAFSA at fafsa.gov. Click on **Start Here**.

2. On the "Login" page, either you can start a FAFSA with your FSA ID (on the left) or your parent can start it with your name, Social Security Number and date of birth (on the right).

3. Whoever starts the FAFSA will be prompted to create a Save Key. Make a note of it.

4. Whenever the first person is done with their part, save the FAFSA and close out of it.

5. Give the other person the Save Key. Then that person can use the Save Key to get into the partially completed FAFSA and do his or her part. A parent can get in by entering your (the student's) identifiers on the right side of the "Login" screen and never needs to use your FSA ID.

6. When everyone is done with their parts of the FAFSA, be sure to click **Submit My FAFSA Now** at the bottom of the "Signature Status" page. You are not done until you see the "Confirmation" page, which you should read and save for your records. If your parent has another child in school, there is a link on the "Confirmation" page to start a new FAFSA for that child, allowing your parent to transfer much of their information and save time.

It is very important that you and your parent create and use your own FSA IDs. The FSA ID acts as a legal signature and should not be shared. Letting someone else create your FSA ID is not allowed and can create problems and delays with your financial aid. For more information or to create your own FSA ID, go to StudentAid.gov/fsaid.

If your parent does not have a Social Security Number, he or she will not be able to get an FSA ID. In that case your parent will print, sign, and mail in a paper signature page.

How do I view my Student Aid Report (SAR)?

If you have an FSA ID:

1. Go to fafsa.gov.

2. Click the **Log In** button and enter your FSA ID on the left. Only you, the student, should know or use your FSA ID.

3. Select **View or Print your Student Aid Report (SAR)** from the "My FAFSA" page.

If you provided an e-mail address on your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA), you will receive an e-mail with a link to an online copy of your SAR.

If you did not provide a valid e-mail address on your FAFSA, the Social Security Number you included in your FAFSA did not match the one on file for you with the Social Security Administration, or you did not sign your FAFSA, you will receive either a SAR or a SAR Acknowledgement via postal mail. Typically, you will be able to access your SAR within two weeks of filing your FAFSA.

I submitted my FAFSA; what happens next?

If you submitted your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) online using *FAFSA on the Web*, then the U.S. Department of Education will process your application within 3-5 days. If you submitted a paper FAFSA, your application will be processed within 7-10 days. Once your application is processed, you will receive a copy of your Student Aid Report (SAR), which summarizes the information you provided on your FAFSA. Review your SAR and make sure all of the information is complete and accurate.

If there is any missing or incorrect information, then you should complete or correct your FAFSA as soon as possible.

Your SAR will include your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC determines your eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant, and the college uses the EFC to assess your eligibility for other federal and nonfederal student aid.

Once your FAFSA is processed by Federal Student Aid, your SAR is sent to the colleges that you listed on your FAFSA. Each college will use the information on your SAR to determine your eligibility for federal and nonfederal student aid. The colleges you listed are responsible for creating your award package and disbursing your financial aid. However, listing a college on your FAFSA is generally not sufficient to receive aid at that college, as most colleges do not create award packages for every applicant who lists the college on a FAFSA.

You should contact the financial aid office at the college you plan to attend to find out if there are additional requirements for receiving financial aid and to learn more about the process of applying for aid at that college.

I filled out my FAFSA form. When can I expect to receive information about my financial aid?

The colleges that you listed on your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) form will use the information you provided on your FAFSA form to determine your eligibility. (Colleges have access to your information one day after it is processed, but each college has its own process and timeframes for accessing FAFSA information.)
However, you should note that listing a college on your FAFSA form is generally not sufficient to receive aid at that college. Most colleges do not create award packages for every applicant who lists the college on a FAFSA form. You should contact the financial aid office at the college you plan to attend for information about applying for aid at that college.

After you have completed the college's application requirements and the college has determined your eligibility, the college will create a financial aid award letter for you. This letter will detail the costs of attending the college for an academic year, as well as any grants, scholarships, work-study, or loans you are eligible to receive.

Most colleges send out financial aid award letters around the same time as admission offer letters. However, the timing can vary from college to college depending on factors such as the date that you submitted your FAFSA form and the number of FAFSA forms the college received.

Your college can tell you when you should expect to receive your award letter.

Will I need to fill out the FAFSA each year?

Yes. Because eligibility for federal student aid does not carry over from one award year to the next, you need to fill out the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) for **each award year** in which you are or plan to be a student.

Your eligibility for financial aid can differ from year to year for various reasons, including your family's financial situation and the number of your family members enrolled in college.