

OCTOBER
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As of ~~October 1~~, FAFSA is available to be submitted for the next school year.

Start

• Many states and colleges use information from FAFSA to determine what financial aid packages they award students, in addition to federal aid

• Apply ASAP – some financial aid money is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis

Apply ASAP

Complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov



GRANTS:
free money that doesn't have to be repaid



WORK-STUDY:
gives you the opportunity to earn money to help pay for your education



LOANS:
money that needs to be repaid with interest

FAFSA helps determine what types of federal student aid you are eligible to receive.

1 Students and parents each need to create FSA IDs before starting their FAFSA

2 Good news! Last year's tax returns can now be used to complete the FAFSA - no guessing required

3 After the FAFSA is submitted, review your Student Aid Report (SAR) for any needed changes

Your award letter will explain what financial aid a college is offering.

- This can also include state and institutional aid
- If you list multiple schools as options in your FAFSA, you may receive multiple award letters
- Compare and decide which school works **BEST FOR YOU!**



FAFSA FAQs



What is the FAFSA?

FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. In order to apply for financial aid, which includes grants, work-study and loans, every high school senior planning to attend college or career school must complete and submit the FAFSA.

Who should apply?

Any high school senior who is planning or considering college or career school should apply. By completing the FAFSA, students will automatically be considered for financial aid.

Who is eligible for financial aid?

To qualify for student aid, students must meet basic eligibility requirements:

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen
- Have a Social Security number
- Be registered with the Selective Service (if you're a male between the ages of 18-25)
- Plan to enroll in an eligible college or career school

Also, high school seniors must show they are qualified to obtain a college or career school education by:

- Having a high school diploma, a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or a state-recognized equivalent
- Completing a high school education in a homeschool setting approved under state law

Are non-U.S. citizens eligible for financial aid?

Generally, the following noncitizens are eligible for financial aid:

- U.S. permanent resident, with a Permanent Resident Card (formerly known as an Alien Registration, Registration Receipt Card or "Green Card")
- Conditional permanent resident (I-551C)
- Other eligible noncitizen with an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the Department of Homeland Security showing any one of the following designations: "Refugee," "Asylum Granted," "Indefinite Parole," "Humanitarian Parole," or "Cuban-Haitian Entrant"
- A citizen of the Republic of Palau (PW), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (MH), or the Federated States of Micronesia (FM)

Noncitizens must enter their eight- or nine-digit Alien Registration Number (ARN) on the FAFSA.

Does parents' citizenship status affect federal student aid eligibility?

No. Parents' citizenship status does not affect the student's eligibility for federal student aid. In fact, the FAFSA doesn't even ask about parents' status.

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FAFSA Cheat Sheet



Keep these tips and tricks handy when filling out your FAFSA to save time and avoid mistakes

BE PREPARED

- Make sure you're on the right website: www.fafsa.gov. There are a lot of copycat sites that will charge a fee. FAFSA is free to file.
- Select the right school year for your application. If you're graduating in 2017, you should complete the 2017-2018 application (it refers to the year the student will be in college or career school).
- Students and parents must **both** have an FSA ID in order to electronically begin and sign the application. Students and parents must also each have an accessible, working email address for them to send verification. If you have a FAFSA PIN from a previous year filing FAFSA, you must still create an FSA ID this year.

FORM TIPS

- Where applicable, enter "0" for financial information instead of leaving a box blank.
- The IRS Data Retrieval Tool can import your tax return information directly from the IRS. It prevents errors and avoids a request for a tax transcript. If that's not available for you to use, manually enter parental tax return information and pay close attention to the directions.
- High school seniors: make sure to select "Never attended college/1st year" for grade level, even if you are in dual-enrollment (it's still considered high school for FAFSA purposes).
- Select that you have received a high school diploma, if it is expected by the end of the school year.
- Use the "Next" and "Previous" buttons on the webpage, not the back and forward arrows on your web browser. Back and forward arrows will log out the user and you could lose information entered on previous web pages.
- Keep an eye out for color-coded sections to indicate which questions are for parents and which are for students to answer.
- When selecting the type of housing planned for each school you're listing, choose either "On Campus" or "Off Campus." If you select "With Parents," you may not get as much financial aid offered. If that is your decided housing arrangement, select "Off Campus."
- For male students, ages 18-25, you must be registered with Selective Service to receive financial aid. If the male has not yet registered, or are unsure, check "Yes, Register Me".

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Myth vs. Fact

The facts about filing your FAFSA



MYTH: It takes too long to complete the application.

FACT: Most people finish filling out their FAFSA in less than half an hour. Thirty minutes of your time can pay off in a big way - free money for college! There are plenty of resources and assistance available to help you. All you need to do is ask.

MYTH: FAFSA only affects federal student aid.

FACT: While it's true that filling out the FAFSA is the only way you'll be able to receive federal student aid, most schools also use the application to assess your eligibility for their own non-federal aid programs. Private and state organizations that award scholarships and grants often use the FAFSA to help determine your eligibility. In fact, some schools won't even consider you for any of their scholarships (including academic scholarships) until you've submitted a FAFSA. Here's the bottom line: FAFSA is the first step you have to take to get access to federal, state and local financial aid and grants.

MYTH: You can't submit FAFSA until your tax return is filed.

FACT: For the 2017-2018 school year, there are two new changes. You can now submit your FAFSA starting Oct. 1, 2016 and you can do so using your 2015 tax return information. This all makes it easier for you to complete your FAFSA. Since your 2015 tax return has already been filed, you can use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool to automatically import information into your FAFSA, making the application process even easier. This will help reduce errors, shorten the time it takes to complete the application, and lowers chances of being selected to verify the information on your FAFSA.

MYTH: Only students with good grades get financial aid.

FACT: A high GPA is important and will help qualify a student for certain schools and academic scholarships. However, most student aid programs do not take a student's grades into consideration. What matters most for receiving those aid packages is that students maintain satisfactory academic progress in their program of study once they begin college or career school.

MYTH: Your family makes too much money, so you'll only get loan offers and won't qualify for financial aid.

FACT: In past years, Southwest Florida high school seniors have left behind more than \$9 million dollars in Pell Grants (a.k.a. free money) - each year - all because students did not apply or assumed they would not receive grant money. There is no income cutoff to qualify for federal student aid. Many factors besides income - from the size of your family to the age of the older parent - are taken into consideration.

Even if you only qualify for loans, federal student loans offer many benefits over private loans. Payments won't have to be made until the student is no longer in school, the loan will have a fixed interest rate, there are several repayment plans available, and students even have the possibility to have some loans forgiven later on. Bottom line: You won't know if you don't try.

Visit www.FAFSAfirst.org for more information



How to Create an FSA ID



The Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) allows students and parents to identify themselves electronically to access FSA websites, including the FAFSA website. An FSA ID is the fastest way to sign your application and have it processed and it's the only way to access or correct your information online.

NOTE:

- Parents and students need to create separate FSA IDs.
- Separate email addresses will be needed for parents and students to complete the process.
- If you have a FAFSA PIN from a previous year filing FAFSA, you must still create an FSA ID this year.

WHAT TO DO:

- Go to fafsa.ed.gov and click on "FSA ID" link at the top (the link looks like a blue padlock).
- Click the green "Create an FSA ID Now" in the center of the page.
- Enter an email address ⇒ confirm the email address ⇒ enter a username and password ⇒ confirm password ⇒ click "I am 13 years of age or older" ⇒ click "Continue."
- A new page will pop up requesting information, including social security number, date of birth, and first and last names. Enter the information ⇒ click "Continue."
- Check that all information is correct. Next, enter your mailing address, city, state, ZIP code, phone numbers and language preference ⇒ click "Continue."
- Select and create challenge questions and answers ⇒ click "Continue."
Note: the significant date challenge question answer **cannot** be the individual's birthday.
- Verify all the information ⇒ click the box to certify correct information ⇒ accept Terms & Conditions ⇒ click "Continue."
- A Secure Code will be sent to the email address used to sign up. This is to verify the email address. **Make sure** to open a new tab or window browser. **Do not** close out of the current browser window - that Secure Code will be entered into the box.
- An email will be sent to confirm that the FSA ID was created successfully.
- A separate email will contain the Secure Code. Enter the Secure Code into the box on the FSA ID website page.
- Save your FSA ID and password for future use. Suggestion: make a "note" in your cell phone and enter your info there for safekeeping. It will be used each year you file for FAFSA and all FSA websites.

Visit www.FAFSAfirst.org for more information

