

8 Steps to Filling Out the FAFSA

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

1. Create an FSA I.D. (fsaid.ed.gov)

An FSA ID is a username and password you need to sign the FAFSA form online. If you don't have an FSA ID, get an FSA ID at fsaid.ed.gov ASAP. It takes about 10 minutes to create an FSA ID.

The student AND parent should BOTH create an FSA ID. Each person must have their **own** unique email address. Each of you will need your Social Security Number or Alien Registration Number.

While you are not required to have an FSA ID to complete and submit a FAFSA, it is the fastest way to sign your application and have it processed. It is also the only way to access or correct your information online, or to pre-fill a FAFSA with information from your previous year's FAFSA.)

Be sure to use the proper website:
FAFSA.gov

There are scam websites that will charge you to complete the FAFSA.
The FAFSA is *always* FREE.



2. Start the FAFSA form at FAFSA.gov

Click "START HERE." If you are the student, select "I am the student." If you are the parent, select "I am a parent, preparer, or student from a Freely Associated State."

Choose which FAFSA you'd like to complete. The FAFSA that becomes available on OCTOBER 1, 2020, is the **2021–2022 FAFSA**. You should complete the 2021–2022 FAFSA if you will be starting college in August 2021 or later. Colleges and scholarship organizations will require the 2021-2022 FAFSA. *If you will be starting college before July 1, 2020 (i.e. summer of 2020,) you may complete the 2020-2021 FAFSA, too, but complete the 2021-2022 FAFSA first.*

Remember, the FAFSA is not a one-time thing. You must complete your FAFSA each school year.

Create a SAVE KEY - The save key is a temporary password that allows you and your parents to share the FAFSA, save the FAFSA, and return to it later if you need to stop and save your work.

3. Fill out the Student Demographic (or personal information) section.

This is information such as your name, date of birth, etc. If you have completed the FAFSA in the past, a lot of your personal information will be pre-populated to save you time. Make sure you enter your personal information exactly as it appears on official government documents. (That's right, no nicknames. 😊)

PARENTS—Remember the FAFSA form is the student's application, not yours. When the FAFSA form says "you" or "your," it is referring to the student (unless otherwise noted.)

4. School Selection

In the School Selection section, **add every school you're considering, even if you haven't applied or been accepted yet.** It doesn't hurt your application to add more schools; colleges can't see the other schools you've added. In fact, you don't even have to remove schools if you later decide not to apply or attend. If you don't end up applying or getting accepted to a school, the school can just disregard your FAFSA form. But, you can remove schools at any time to make room for new schools. You can add up to 10 schools at a time.

5. Answer the Dependency Status questions.

In this section, you'll be asked a series of specific questions to determine whether you are required to provide your parent's information on the FAFSA form.

These dependency guidelines are set by Congress and are different from those used by the IRS. Even if you live on your own, support yourself, and file taxes on your own, you may still be considered a dependent student for federal student aid purposes. If you are determined to be a dependent student, you'll be required to report your parent's information. If you're determined to be an independent student, you won't have to provide your parent's information and you can skip the next step.

6. Fill out the Parent Demographics section.

This is where your parent(s) will provide basic demographic information. Remember that it doesn't matter if you don't live with your parent(s); you still must report information about them if you were determined to be a dependent student in the step above. The following people are **NOT** your parents unless they have legally adopted you: Grandparents, Foster Parents, Legal Guardians, Older Siblings, Relatives.

7. Supply your Financial Information.

Here is where you and your parent(s) (if applicable) will provide your financial information. This step is incredibly simple if you use the **IRS Data Retrieval Tool** (IRS DRT) which is available within the FAFSA. The IRS DRT allows you to import your IRS tax information into the FAFSA with just a few clicks. Using this tool also may reduce the amount of paperwork you need to provide to your school. So if you're eligible, use it!

To access the tool, indicate that you've "already completed" taxes on the student or parent finances page. If you're eligible, you'll see an a "Link To IRS" button. Choose that option and follow the prompts.

8. Sign and Submit your FAFSA form.

You're not finished with the FAFSA until you AND your parent (if you're a dependent student) sign it. The quickest and easiest way to sign your FAFSA is online with your FSA ID. **Note:** If you (the student) logged in to the FAFSA with your FSA ID, you won't need to provide it again on this page, but if you're a dependent student, your parent will still need to sign before you can completely submit.

Make sure you and your parent don't mix up your FSA IDs. This is one of the most common errors we see, and why it's extremely important for each person to create his or her own FSA ID and not share it with anyone. ALSO, make sure the parent who is using his/her FSA ID to sign the FAFSA form chooses the right parent number from the drop-down menu.

We recommend signing the FAFSA with an FSA ID because it's the fastest way to get your FAFSA processed. However, if you and/or your parent are unable to sign the FAFSA electronically with an FSA ID, you can mail in a signature page. From the sign and submit page, select "Other options to sign and submit" and then choose "Print A Signature Page." Just keep in mind that your FAFSA will take longer to process if you go this route.

You've submitted your FAFSA form. What's next? No, you won't get a check in the mail from the government. There's more to it than that. 😊 Check out "FAFSA Next Steps" at <https://studentaid.gov/help-center/answers/article/next-steps-after-submitting-fafsa>