

# The FAFSA Guide



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**The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is your first step to financial aid.**

## What is it?

The FAFSA - the form that the federal government uses to determine your eligibility for federal aid. This aid includes grants, work-study, scholarships and loans.

## How does it work?

Using your FAFSA, the federal processor determines your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). EFC - the amount of money your family can be expected to contribute to your college costs each year.

Your school will then try to meet your needs through a financial aid award made up of funds from federal, state, school and private sources as well as loans, grants and student employment.

## Where can I get one?

- Download or complete the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- At your financial aid office or local library
- If you completed the FAFSA last year, you may receive a Renewal FAFSA through the mail
- Or call 1-800-4FED-AID

## COMPLETING THE FAFSA

- **Complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1 of each year.** The FAFSA becomes available each year on January 1. Since funds are limited at many schools, early submission of the FAFSA maximizes your chances of receiving aid.
- **Submit the FAFSA whether or not you think you qualify for aid.** Sometimes being rejected for federal aid is a prerequisite for receiving private awards.
- **Review all of your data on the FAFSA every year.** Your eligibility can change from year to year, depending on your family's circumstances.
- **Contact your college's financial aid office for additional information.** Your school may require additional forms or may have an earlier submission deadline.
- **If you applied for financial aid last year, you might qualify for a Renewal FAFSA,** which has fewer questions and pre-filled information fields. Check with your financial aid administrator for more details.
- **If you have any questions call 1-800-4-FED-AID.**

## **5 Most Common FAFSA Mistakes.**

1. Do not leave a field blank. Use a zero if the question does not apply to you.
2. Don't forget to report ALL required sources of untaxed income.
3. Use the 1040 Federal tax return for reporting income and taxes paid, not the W-2.
4. Include yourself in household size, even if you didn't live there the previous year.
5. Sign the application. If you are filing as a dependent, make sure your parents sign too.

## AFTER YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE FAFSA

- **Read your Student Aid Report (SAR) carefully.** The SAR is your official record that the federal processor received your FAFSA. If you find any errors on your SAR, you should report them to your college's financial aid administrator to ask how you should make corrections. Unresolved errors could affect your total aid award.
- **Call the federal processor at 1-800-433-3243 if you do not receive your SAR in 4-6 weeks.** Be ready to provide your name, Social Security number and date of birth for verification.
- **Check to see if your SAR has been selected for verification.** Look under the date (on the top right corner) for the letters EFC followed by a series of numbers. If there is an asterisk (\*) after your EFC (Estimated Family Contribution), your SAR has been selected for verification. That means that your college will compare your SAR with documents, including tax returns, that verify your financial status. If asked, submit the information requested to your college's financial aid office as soon as possible. Your aid may be delayed or decreased if the materials are not provided promptly.

**To minimize delays, complete your FAFSA online. Visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).**

**To search over 600,000 scholarships, visit [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)!**