

## The FAFSA: The Most Important Financial Aid Form You'll Ever Fill Out



The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, is used by colleges and the federal government to determine your eligibility for grants, need-based scholarships, loans, and work-study programs.

The FAFSA becomes available each year on October of the year you apply to college. You should complete it before your state or school's priority deadline to be eligible for the maximum financial aid. You can [look up your state's deadline here](#).

### Get Ready!

Filing the FAFSA isn't as complicated or time-consuming as it sounds—a little preparation will help make the process go smoothly. Use [this worksheet](#) to get a sneak preview of what the form looks like and the questions it asks!



Before you can submit your FAFSA, you'll need to [create your FSA ID](#). You'll need an FSA ID to log in to your account, sign the FAFSA and make changes, or add schools. You and your parent must create separate FSA IDs.

### Get Help



Don't worry about getting stuck while you're filling out the FAFSA—lots of help is available, starting with your school's financial aid office. They'll help you with any questions you have at any step of the process.

On the FAFSA app and website, there are tooltips next to each question, [detailed help pages](#), and a chat option. There's also an 800 number to call (1-800-4FED-AID).

The FAFSA even has its own YouTube channel! [Check it out](#) for step-by-step instructions on creating an FSA ID and filling out the form, help understanding different types of aid, and more.

## Get Filing!

Here's a checklist of everything you and your parent/guardian need to fill out, sign, and submit the FAFSA:

- An [FSA ID](#). Your FSA ID allows you to log in to your account, sign the FAFSA, and make changes or add schools. You and your parent must create separate FSA IDs. Create this first!
- You and your parent's Social Security number. Here's what to do if your parent [doesn't have a Social Security number](#).
- Driver's license (if you have one)
- Your and your parent's federal income tax returns and W-2s from 2020 (you can use the [IRS Data Retrieval Tool](#) to import this data!)
- Bank statement
- If applicable, other records of money earned and records of investments and untaxed income

*Don't worry if you can't find these materials right away; you can start the FAFSA and come back as many times as you need to update information or add schools. The important thing is to get started!*