FAFSA FAQs

The earlier the FAFSA is completed, the sooner schools can send financial aid award offers and parents and students can make smarter decisions about college or career school affordability.

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, undergraduate, or graduate student 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
• Plan to enroll in an eligible college or career school

Also, students 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")
• Other eligible noncitizen with an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) showing any one of the following designations: "Refugee," "Asylum Granted," "Conditional Permanent Resident", "Cuban-Haitian Entrant", "Conditional Entrant" (valid only if issued before April 1, 1990), "Parolee" (you must be paroled for at least one year, and you must be able to provide evidence from the USCIS that you are in the United States for other than a temporary purpose with the intention of becoming a U.S. citizen or permanent resident). See modified parole requirements for Ukrainian and Afghan citizens and nationals.
• A citizen of the Republic of Palau (PW), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (MH), or the Federated States of Micronesia (FM) are eligible for Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and Federal Work-Study. You or parent holds T-1 Visa (for human trafficking) or are battered immigrant-qualified alien.

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.

What types of financial aid are available?

- **Grants** (i.e., free money) are awarded on the basis of need and do not have to be repaid.
- **Work-Study** enables students to earn money during the school year while also gaining valuable work experience, typically in part-time, career-related jobs.
- **Loans** consist of money that students borrow to help pay for college and must be repaid (plus interest). The two most common types of loans offered by the U.S. Department of Education include: Direct Subsidized Loans and Unsubsidized Loans.
  - **Direct Subsidized Loans** are loans available to eligible undergraduate students with financial need. The interest on these loans is covered until six months after students leave school.
  - **Direct Unsubsidized Loans** are loans available to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students; there is no requirement to demonstrate financial need and the interest accrues immediately on these loans. Loan repayment begins six months after students leave school.

What is the deadline to apply for financial aid?

For the 2025-2026 school year, The FAFSA will be available December 1, 2024. Applicants will need to use their 2023 IRS income information. Because colleges use the FAFSA to provide other types of aid (state aid, private scholarships, etc.), students should check with the college(s) they are interested in attending, as many have priority deadlines for submitting FAFSA.

What documents are needed to apply for the FAFSA?

When filling out the 2025-2026 FAFSA, having access to the following information will be extremely helpful and make the process go smoother:
- Create your StudentAid.gov account (FSA ID username and password)
- Social Security number
- Student's Alien registration number (if applicable)
- 2023 Federal tax return information and W2's
- Records of untaxed income
- Cash, savings and checking account balances
- Investments including real estate other than the home in which you live
- Current net worth of business and investment farms (regardless of size)
- List of schools you're interested in attending (can add up to 20 schools)

What information do I need when inviting my contributor(s) to complete the FAFSA? *Tip: Information must match as it entered on parent FSA ID account*

- Legal name (from their social security card or legal document)
- Date of birth
- Social Security Number (SSN) if they have one OR mailing address if they don't have an SSN
- Parent Email address

How much financial aid can students receive?

Every student will be eligible for a different financial aid package, based on many factors. After students submit their FAFSA, each school they list in their application will determine a financial aid package and send an award letter with the types of aid and amounts they are offering. It depends on several factors, including:
- Cost of attendance for the school
- Student Aid Index (based on the information entered in the FAFSA)
- Year in school
- Enrollment status (full-time, part-time, etc.)

Visit **www.FAFSAfirst.org** for more information.