

# FAFSA STEP BY STEP

Ready to fill out the FAFSA? Gather the items listed below  
And follow the guide.



## WHAT DO I NEED

- 2021 tax information for parents and for yourself if you filed. You will need marital status, number of dependents, adjusted gross income information.
- Other income information that is not taxed (including child support/TANF). Checking account balances, savings account balances, investment information (other than the home you live in).
- Social Security Numbers for Student and Family, or Alien Identification number
- A list of Schools that you would like to attend.

## HOW DO I COMPLETE THE FAFSA

- First, create an FSA ID in <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/sign-in/landing>. Write your username and password somewhere you can find it. Both student and parent will need an FSA ID because the parent will need to sign in with their own FSA ID in order to sign the FAFSA.
- Go to [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov) and click "start here".
- Click "sign in" and enter your FSA ID username and password that you created earlier.
- Answer all questions in the FAFSA, you can save and come back if you need to. CAUTION: read the question by question guide below.

## QUESTION BY QUESTION GUIDE

### STEP 1 STUDENT INFORMATION

- **Student Demographics Section**
  - Fill out student Information exactly as it appears on the student's social security card. Enter your permanent home/ mailing address.
- **Driver's license**
  - Enter the student's driver's license number (if there is one.) If you only have an ID, do NOT fill in your ID number or you will get an error.
- **Email address**
  - Enter an email address that you have access to and that you use most frequently. This is where you will get updates about your FAFSA. Do not use your school email because you will need to access it after high school.
- **Citizenship**
  - If you are neither a citizen or eligible non-citizen, you are not eligible to fill out the FAFSA, please fill out the WAFSA here: <https://wsac.wa.gov/WAFSAelig>

- **Marital Status**
  - This information is regarding the student's marital status, not the marital status of the parents.
- **State Residency**
  - Your permanent, home state information should be entered, even if you are residing on campus. This can be a parent or guardian's home address if you are a dependent student, typically where you receive mail.
- **Parent's level of education.**
  - Some scholarships or grants are based on the level of schooling completed by your parents.
  - If you live with a legal guardian instead of a parent, you do not need to fill out their information on this question or any financial questions because you are considered an independent student.
- **Student's education details**
  - Select appropriate information. This information is used to determine eligibility for financial aid. A GED still qualifies you for federal aid.
- **Education level**
  - Select the grade level you will be going into during the year you are applying for aid, not the one you are currently in or recently completed.
- **Degree or Certificate seeking**
  - Enter what degree or certificate you are going to be working towards.
- **Work Study**
  - Federal work study is a program that may offer you a part time job to earn money while you are in school. I recommend selecting yes. If you opt into the program and later decide you don't want to participate, you can always decline the offer. Selecting 'yes' does not guarantee you a job with the work study program.
- **SCHOOL SELECTION**
  - Enter all schools you are even considering applying to. If you do not add a school to your FAFSA, they will not offer you financial aid. You can always log into your FAFSA and add a school later.
- **STEP 2 PARENT INFORMATION**
- **Parent marital status**
  - If you live with a legal guardian, not parents, do not enter any information here. If your parents are divorced, you do not need to put both parent's financial information in the FAFSA. You will only enter financial information for the parent who the student lives with the majority of the time.
- **Parent social security information**
  - If the student's parents do not have a social security number, use the Alien ID number. If parents do not have either, enter 000-00-0000. The student is still eligible for federal aid, however, the parent will not be able to make an FSA ID in order to sign so the FAFSA will need to be printed out, signed by the parent and mailed in. If the parent does not want to do this, the student may opt to fill out the WAFSA instead.
- **Parent's residency status and Household occupants attending college**

- How many people in your parent’s household- include yourself, your parents, your parent’s other children even if they do not live with the parent, other people that live with your parents if your parents help support them.
- How many people in college- include yourself, do not include your parents, include others in the household unless they are in the military or service academies. Adults who have already earned a degree, are in graduate or professional programs, or who are over the age of 24 will not be counted
- **Parent Federal Benefit Status:**
  - Check any boxes that apply. This helps determine eligibility for grants.
- **Parent’s Income Tax Return:**
  - If your answer to question #55 was “unmarried, but parents living together” call 1-800-433-3243 for assistance answering questions 76-89.
  - If your parents did not work and do not file taxes, skip to question # 83
- **Tax return continued**
  - Use IRS data retrieval tool if possible. If not, use a copy of your parent’s filed tax return to fill out these questions.

### ▪ **STEP 3 STUDENT STATUS**

These questions are asked to determine if you are an independent student. Couch surfing or doubling up with another family is considered homeless by the McKinney Vento act of 1987. A homeless student is an independent student.

- **Age before January 1, 2000**
  - If you were born before this date you are considered an independent student.
- **Student marital status**
  - If you are married you are considered an independent student.
- **Graduate program status**
  - If you are a Graduate student, you will only qualify for federal loans. You are only a graduate student if you are working towards a Master’s or Doctorate.
- **Military status**
  - These questions determine your eligibility for military aid and Independent Student status. Answer for the student, not parents.

## **STEP 4 STUDENT FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

- **Student income tax return**
  - Answer yes if you, the student, worked the previous year and filed taxes. You may use the IRS data retrieval tool that automatically fills in tax information. Follow the prompts on the screen.
- **Student tax return details**
  - Enter this information exactly as it appears on your tax return.
- **Schedule 1**
  - Only enter this information if you have adjustments to enter. If you use the IRS data retrieval tool, it may be entered for you.
- **Adjusted Gross Income**

- This figure can be found on either Line 37 (1040), Line 21 (1040A), or Line 4 (1040EZ) of your Federal tax return. The IRS data retrieval tool may enter it for you if used.
- **Tax return info**
  - Use your tax return or IRS retrieval tool to fill in this information.
- **Cash Balance**
  - Enter the student’s checking and savings account balances. Do NOT include any student aid in this amount.
- **Investments**
  - Total value of all student’s investments and business income.
- **Other income**
  - Check the boxes if they apply to the student only. Parent information does not go here.
- **Untaxed income**
  - Check the boxes if they apply to student income only. Parent information does not go here.

## **STEP 5 STUDENT HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION**

- **Student Household Information**
  - This question asks who lives in the same household as the student, not including parents. Include student, siblings, relatives who the parents provide more than 50% of the support for.
- **Student Federal Benefit Status**
  - If you received any government benefits, you may qualify for federal financial aid.
- **Dislocated Worker Status**
  - Answer for student, not the parent.

## **STEP 6 SEND, SIGN, AND DATE**

- A preparer is someone who gets paid to help you fill out the FAFSA. If you did not have one, leave this part blank.
- A parent from step 4 must sign unless the student is an independent student. The FAFSA will enter your signature electronically using your FSA ID number. Parents and students must create separate FSA IDs.
- Click “Submit”! You are done.

## **I AM FINISHED! NOW WHAT?**

- You will receive an email telling you that your FAFSA was processed.
- Apply to the schools you want to attend. Your school may want additional information from you.
- You will receive an offer from each school you apply to in the form of a letter sent by email. This may include grants or additional loans that you may reject.
- Review your offers and decide which school is best for you based on what you can afford or what's most convenient.