



FAFSA PREP STEP-BY-STEP

Follow these steps for quick, easy, and correct Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion

1.

DETERMINE YOUR DEPENDENCY STATUS

INDEPENDENT STUDENT

only reports information about themselves; may report information about a spouse if married

VS.

DEPENDENT STUDENT

reports information about themselves and their parents

You are an **INDEPENDENT** student if at least ONE of the following applies to you:

- You will be 24 years of age or older as of Jan 2026
- You have a child or other dependent for whom you provide the majority of financial support
- You have a court-ordered legal guardian who is not your biological or adoptive parent
- You were in foster care at any point after age 13
- You were a ward of the court at any point after age 13
- You are married (but not separated or divorced)
- You are homeless or at risk of being homeless
- Your parents are deceased, incarcerated, or otherwise difficult to locate or contact
- You are currently on active duty or are a veteran of the US armed forces

You are a **DEPENDENT** student if NONE of the above apply.

If unusual circumstances prevent you from providing parental information, you will be able to submit the FAFSA as a **provisionally independent student**. Follow up with the Financial Aid Office at the school(s) listed on the FAFSA afterwards.



CREATE STUDENTAID.GOV ACCOUNT (FSA ID)

2.

An FSA ID is a StudentAid.Gov account username and password students and contributors create to gain access to the US Department of Education's online systems. An FSA ID serves as a legal signature when completing the FAFSA.

You will need to provide the following information to create your FSA ID:

- ☐ Name (exactly as it appears on your Social Security Card if you have one)
- ☐ Social Security Number (if you have one)
- ☐ Date of birth
- ☐ Email address (you will have access to in the future; do not use school or work email)

3.

GATHER INFORMATION

The lists below refer to information students and their contributor(s) will need to provide on the FAFSA. Gathering this information in advance can help streamline the FAFSA completion process.

GENERAL INFO

- ☐ Current marital status: Married/Remarried; Divorced/Separated; Unmarried & living together; Widowed; Single
- ☐ StudentAid.Gov account (FSA ID)
- ☐ Date of birth
- ☐ Social Security Number or Individual Tax Identification Number (if any)
- ☐ Email address (and mailing address)
- ☐ List of postsecondary institutions student will apply to, or current schools student will continue attending

FINANCIAL INFO

- ☐ 2024 federal tax forms (1040 and all schedules)
- ☐ Total current amount in checking and savings account(s)
- ☐ Net worth (value minus debt) of current stocks, bonds, mutual funds, 529 plans, etc.
- ☐ Net worth of investment/rental property/rented portion of a home
- ☐ Net worth of business(es) and/or for profit agricultural operation(s) with 100+ full-time employees
- ☐ Records of child support received in the past year for all children
- ☐ Federal benefits (SNAP, WIC, TANF, etc.) received in 2024 and 2025 by anyone in the family



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