



FAFSA Quick Reference Sheet

Parental Information & Dependency Status

- Whose information do I provide if my parents are unmarried, widowed, single, separated or divorced?**
 - If your biological or adoptive **parents are unmarried but living together**, answer the questions about both parents.
 - If your **parent is widowed or single**, answer questions about the parent you live with. If your widowed parent is remarried as of the day you sign the FAFSA, answer the questions about that parent and his/her spouse (your stepparent).
 - If your **parents are divorced or separated**, answer the questions about the parent with whom you lived with more during the past 12 months. If you lived exactly six-months with each parent, or have not lived with either parent, give answers about the parent who provided more financial support during the past 12 months or during the most recent year that you actually received support from a parent. If this parent is remarried as of today, answer the questions about that parent and his/her spouse (your stepparent).
 - **Notes:**
 - On the FAFSA, birth parents, custodial stepparents (who are married to your biological/adoptive parent or who have adopted you), adoptive parents, or a person that the state has determined to be your parent (for example, when a state allows another person's name to be listed as a parent on a birth certificate) **are considered your parents**. The following people **are not considered your parents**, unless they have legally adopted you: grandparents, foster parents, legal guardians, older brothers or sisters, and uncles or aunts.
 - **Parental custodianship on the FAFSA is not the same as dependency on federal taxes**. The parent who claimed you as a dependent on their tax return is not necessarily your custodial parent for purposes of the FAFSA.
 - Same-sex couples must be reported as married if they were legally married in a state or other jurisdiction (foreign country) that permits same-sex marriage, without regard to where the couple resides.



- For FAFSA purposes, a married couple is separated if the couple is considered legally separated by a state or if the couple is legally married but has chosen to live separate lives, including living in separate households, as though they were not married. If your parents are separated but living together, select “Married or Remarried,” not “Divorced or Separated”.
- When two married persons live as a married couple but are separated by physical distance (or have separate households), they are considered married for FAFSA purposes.

2. **Do I need to provide my parents’ income information even if I do not live with them and they do not support me?**

Most students are considered dependent and need to provide parent income information on the FAFSA, even if they are not receiving financial support from their parents. You are considered independent (meaning you do not need to provide parental information) if you can answer “yes” to any of the following questions:

- Were you **born before January 1, 1997**?
- As of today, are you **married**? (Answer “Yes” if you are separated but not divorced.)
- At the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year, will you be working on a **master’s or doctorate degree program**?
- Do you **have children** who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021?
- Do you **have dependents** (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021?
- Are you currently serving on **active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces** for purposes other than training?
- Are you a **veteran** of the U.S. Armed Forces?
- At any time since you turned age 13, were both your **parents deceased**, were you **in foster care**, or were you a **dependent or ward of the court**?
- Has it been decided by a court in your state of legal residence that you are an **emancipated minor** or that you are in a **legal guardianship**?



- At any time on or after July 1, 2019, were you **homeless or at risk of being homeless**? Homeless includes:
 - Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
 - Children and youths who have primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
 - Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, etc.; and
 - Migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described here

Special Circumstances

1. What if I am unable to provide my parents' income information and signature?

Under **very limited** circumstances, an otherwise dependent student may be able to submit the FAFSA without parental information due to a special circumstance. **Examples of a special circumstance** when you may be able to submit your FAFSA without providing parental information include:

- Your parents are incarcerated; or
- You have left home due to an abusive family environment; or
- You do not know where your parents are and are unable to contact them (and you have not been adopted)

The following are situations that **would not be considered a special circumstance**:

- Your parents do not want to provide their information on your FAFSA; or
- Your parents refuse to contribute to your college or career training expenses; or
- Your parents do not claim you as a dependent on their income taxes; or
- You do not live with your parents



If you believe you have a special circumstance and are unable to provide parental information, you should complete information about you and your finances, and skip any questions about your parents. Sign your FAFSA with your FSA ID and leave your parent's FSA ID blank. It is important to note:

- You will be allowed to submit your FAFSA without parental information; however, your FAFSA will not be considered complete and Federal Student Aid will not calculate your Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which determines how much aid you are eligible to receive.
- Contact your Financial Aid Administrator (FAA) before submitting your FAFSA without parental data. After submitting it, follow up with the FAA at the school you plan to attend to complete your FAFSA and receive an EFC.
- Under federal law, only your FAA has the authority to decide whether or not you must provide parental information on your FAFSA.
- You will have to provide documentation to verify your situation; this may include court or law enforcement documents, letters from a clergy member, school counselor, or social worker, and/or other relevant data that explains your special circumstance.
- Your FAA will make the final decision on whether your circumstance allows you to proceed without providing parental data.

Filing Deadlines

1. I haven't finished my taxes yet – what should I do?

Beginning with the 2017–2018 FAFSA, students have been required to report income information from two-year prior tax returns. For example, on the 2020–2021 FAFSA, students (and parents, as appropriate) will report their 2018 income information, rather than their 2019 income information.

Filing Requirements

1. My parents don't have to file taxes – what should I do?

Even if you and/or your parents were not required to file a 2018 income tax return, you will need to calculate your and your parents' earnings for that year. Use W-2 forms and other records to answer the questions. If you and your family live a Subsistence Way of Life (a traditional way of living off the land that has sustained Alaskans for thousands of years), you will have to document it and notify the Financial Aid Administrator at your school.