

## Frequently Asked Questions: Filing the FAFSA ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov))

### 1. Who is eligible to apply?

The student must have a valid Social Security Number and be one of the following to receive federal student aid:

- U.S. citizen
  - U.S. national (includes natives of American Samoa or Swain's Island)
  - U.S. permanent resident who has an I-151, I-551, or I-551C (Permanent Resident Card). If you're not in one of these categories, you must have an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) showing one of the following designations:
    - "Refugee" or "Asylum Granted" or "Cuban-Haitian Entrant, Status Pending"
    - Victims of human trafficking, T-visa holder or student's parent that are a T-1 visa holder.
    - "Parolee" (You must be paroled into the United States for at least one year).
- If the student has a Social Security Number but the parent does not, your family will need to complete the paper application instead of the electronic application.

### 2. What do I need to complete the FAFSA?

Students and parents need to bring the following information in order to complete the FAFSA.

- 2011 Federal Tax Return, W-2 or other income information (social security benefits, veteran's benefits, etc.)
- 2011 Year End Bank Statement (checking, savings)
- 2011 business and investment information (farm records, business records, 2nd home mortgage, stocks, bonds, etc.)
- Social Security Number
- Alien Registration Card (if you are not a U.S. Citizen)
- Driver's license (if applicable)
- FAFSA PIN #

### 3. Is the form really complicated? Should I pay a service to complete it for me?

If you apply using *FAFSA on the Web*<sup>SM</sup> at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov), you get online instructions for each question, and you can chat live online with a customer service representative. Whether you apply online or use the paper FAFSA, you can get free help by calling the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) at the telephone number(s) listed below or by contacting the financial aid administrator at your college.

**Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC):**  
**1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)**  
**(TTY 1-800-730-8913)**

Various websites do offer help filing the FAFSA for a fee. We urge you not to pay these sites for assistance that is provided for free. You can also attend College Goal events for free in person help February 11-12, 2012. [www.collegegoalsunday.org](http://www.collegegoalsunday.org)

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**4. What if a student's parents are not married?**

If parents are separated or divorced, the custodial parent is responsible for filling out the FAFSA. The custodial parent for federal student aid purposes is the parent with whom you lived the most during the past 12 months. Note that this is not necessarily the same as the parent who has legal custody. If you did not live with one parent more than the other, the parent who provided you with the most financial support during the past twelve months should fill out the FAFSA. This is probably the parent who claimed you as a dependent on their tax return. If the custodial parent remarries, the finances of the custodial parent's spouse (the stepparent) must be included. Any child support and/or alimony received from the non-custodial parent must be included on the FAFSA. If you have not received any support from either parent during the past 12 months, use the most recent calendar year for which you received some support from a parent. Biological parents who never married are treated the same as parents who are divorced. See for more information.

**5. What if a parent cannot or does not want to complete the FAFSA?**

There are some special circumstances where a student may be able to submit the FAFSA without providing parental information:

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

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

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

The FAFSA exists to help identify and fill with student aid the gaps between what a family is able to provide and a student's need to continue education. In most cases, a parent must participate in a student's application for aid. It's among the most important things a parent can do to prepare for a young person for a life of independence and self-reliance. See <http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/parentsrefuse.phtml> for more information.

**6. Is it safe to enter my social security number online?**

The FAFSA online form is secure. When you complete the form, you identify yourself to the federal government using your Social Security Number. The federal government already has this number; they ask you for it only as a way to make sure that the people completing the form are who they say they are.

**7. What is the FAFSA deadline?**

The government deadline for the 2012-2013 FAFSA is May 30, 2013. Obviously, students attending college in 2012 would like to have financial aid before beginning classes in the fall. For best results, apply no later than **March 1, 2012**. Give yourself the Valentine of peace of mind by completing the form by **February 14, 2012**. If you have not completed your tax filing by that time, you may use estimates of your income. Once you have completed your tax forms, make the corrections to your file either on the Web or by mailing in your paper Student Aid Report (SAR), which you will receive after submitting your FAFSA.