FAFSA GUIDE

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Financial aid is important, but it can sometimes be a confusing process. With this guide, we'll help walk you through one of the most important parts of applying for financial aid: filling out your Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA.

In order to apply for any federal aid for college, you must first fill out and submit a FAFSA, which is used by the federal government to determine your eligibility for grants and Federal Direct Stafford loans. You need to file a FAFSA application for each award year that you want to apply for aid.

This guide is meant to be used while you are filling out the FAFSA application online at www.fafsa.ed.gov and refers specifically to actions you're directed to take and questions you're asked to answer on this site. Because the FAFSA application is long and somewhat detailed, this guide will address helpful tips and frequently asked questions. If you have further questions or issues, please contact your school's Financial Aid department.

Please note that financial aid is available to those who qualify and is tied to your personal financial situation. Depending on where you work, military service, or other factors, your full financial aid package may also include employer tuition reimbursement, military benefits and any other sources of funding you may be eligible to receive.

For the Financial Information section of the application, you may want to have a copy of your tax return(s) and/or W-2s on hand for easy reference.

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Getting Started

To begin, go to www.fafsa.ed.gov and click "Start A New FAFSA." As you go through the application, notice the "Help and Hints" section to the right; it will also provide additional information to guide you through the process.

On the Login page, enter your first name, last name, social security number and date of birth, then click Next. If you've previously completed FAFSA you may be given the option for a FAFSA renewal. We recommend completing a renewal as this will be a quicker option since your personal information will be auto-filled. Click "Start FAFSA."

Select the appropriate FAFSA based on the guidelines provided. Depending on the time frame that you are attending, you may need to complete both FAFSAs.

When you are asked to create a password, note that this is your permanent password. Please make sure it is something that you will easily be able to remember in case you need to save and resume the application later. Your password must be 4-8 characters long. Click Next.

This introduction screen shares links to additional information about the FAFSA process. After reviewing any of the information of interest, click Next.

On the Student Demographic Information page, enter your personal information and then click Next. Here, note that entering your driver's license information is not required.

On the Student Eligibility page, when answering the question pertaining to your grade level, please note that only students currently enrolled in a master's program are considered Graduate/Professional students. Be sure to enter your high school information and click Next.

School Selection

Enter the Federal School Code for the college or university you plan to attend. If you don't know the code, you can use the search option on that page to find your school.

Next, you will need to check the box next to the school information that appears. Once the box is checked, click the "Add" button to include that university on the application.

In the School Selection Summary section, please select the appropriate housing plans. If you are planning to attend college online, note that On Campus does NOT apply to online students. Once you have made your selection, click Next.

Independent or Dependent?

When you get to the Dependency Determination section, there are a few important details to note.

If you have turned at least 24 before January 1st preceding the beginning of the FAFSA award year, then you will automatically be considered independent.

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If you are not 24 by that date then the Department of Education will consider other circumstances to determine your dependency status. After you answer the questions listed, you will see a statement at the bottom of the page telling you if you need to include your parent's information.

An independent student's household size should include you, your spouse (if married), your children, and/or other dependents if they live with you and receive more than 50% of their financial support from you during the FAFSA award year in which you are applying.

A dependent student's household size should include you (the student), your parents, and any other children and/or dependents who live with your parents and will receive more than 50% of their financial support from your parents during the FAFSA award year in which you are applying.

Once you have entered the information, click Next.

Financial Information

For this next section on Student Financial Information, refer to the copies of your tax return(s) and/or W-2s. If you are not sure where to find the requested information on these documents, please refer to the Help and Hints section on the right of the screen. If you have submitted your tax return, then using the "IRS Data Retrieval Tool" option can expedite the application process. We encourage students who are able to use this tool to do so.

Regarding the next section, note that a person may be considered a dislocated worker only if he or she meets the conditions listed on the right of your screen.

Once this section is complete, click Next. Review and answer these questions carefully.
Refer to the "Help and Hints" if you have questions, once you have answered the questions, click Next.

Finishing the Application

When you get to the Sign & Submit section, answer the preparer section, "No." The preparer would be an

authorized 3rd party completing the FAFSA on your behalf.

Your FAFSA will be processed more quickly if you log in with your FSA ID and sign electronically. If you don't have an FSA ID you can register for one using the link provided through the FAFSA website. Once you have completed the fields, you must agree with the terms and conditions. By signing, YOU, THE STUDENT, certify that you:

1. Will use federal and/or state student financial aid only to pay the cost of attending an institution of higher education,

2. Are not in default on a federal student loan or have made satisfactory arrangements to repay it,

3. Do not owe money back on a federal student grant or have made satisfactory arrangements to repay it,

4. Will notify your school if you default on a federal student loan, and

5. Will not receive a Federal Pell Grant from more than one school for the same period of time.

You also certify that all of the information you provided is true and complete to the best of your knowledge and you agree, if asked:

1. To provide information that will verify the accuracy of your completed form

2. To provide U.S. or state income tax forms that you filed or are required to file

Next click "Submit Your FAFSA Now."

Once your FAFSA has successfully been submitted, the Department of Education will process and send your information to the colleges you selected within 2-3 business days. Please remember that additional documentation may be required once your information is received by the Financial Aid office. An estimate of your aid availability is shown on the final Confirmation Page.

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