

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

FROM REQUESTING A PIN, COMPLETING THE FAFSA TO COMPARING AWARD LETTERS.
HOW TO COMPLETE THE FAFSA ONLINE IN AN HOUR OR TWO!

Summary

- ▶ The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is your starting point for most student financial assistance programs. Many states and schools also use the FAFSA as part of their application process for non-federal aid.
- ▶ If you are dreading the FAFSA, take a deep breath and relax. It takes a little time, and it is not as difficult as you may think. And completing the FAFSA is free.

Important: File the FAFSA every year!

You'll need to submit a FAFSA every year you're in college. It takes time, but getting help to pay for college can definitely make your efforts worthwhile.

If you follow these basic steps, you could complete your "FAFSA on the Web" in as little as an hour or two.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE JANUARY 1

Step 1. Get a Social Security number (SSN)

- ▶ FAFSAs submitted without an SSN will not be processed. To apply for a SSN, visit Social Security Online, www.SSA.gov.

Step 2. Request a PIN

- ▶ With a PIN you can apply for and "sign" the FAFSA online, check the status of your submitted FAFSA, and make corrections. If you plan to submit your FAFSA online, you (and one of your parents) can request a PIN at the U.S. Department of Education pin registration website PIN.ed.gov.

Step 3. Note state and college deadlines and requirements

- ▶ College and state financial aid deadlines tend to be earlier than the federal deadline (many as early as February or March), and may require an application in addition to the FAFSA.

Step 4. Obtain the "FAFSA on the Web" worksheet

- ▶ Use this tool to help gather information needed to complete the official FAFSA. Worksheets are available online at www.FAFSA.gov.

TIP:

No need to wait for your SAR to learn your EFC. To get an estimate today, visit SallieMae.com/Tools

BENEFITS OF USING "FAFSA ON THE WEB" TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION:

- ▶ Online help is available for each question.
- ▶ Calculations are performed automatically.
- ▶ "Chat" online with a customer service representative for free.
- ▶ Potential errors are detected before the application is processed.
- ▶ Electronic filing is faster than submitting the paper version.

WHAT TO DO AFTER JANUARY 1

Step 5. Complete the FAFSA online

- ▶ To access "FAFSA on the Web", visit www.FAFSA.gov (it is also offered in Spanish). Apply as soon as you can after January 1, because funding may be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Step 6. Review your Student Aid Report (SAR)

- ▶ The U.S. Department of Education will send a SAR to you. Your SAR summarizes the data you reported on your FAFSA. Review your SAR line-by-line. Make corrections or changes.
- ▶ If your FAFSA information is complete, the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is printed in the upper-right-hand corner. Schools you listed on the FAFSA will receive electronic copies of your SAR.

Step 7. Determine if you need to verify your information

- ▶ At least 30% of submitted FAFSAs are selected for verification. If you've been selected, an asterisk (*) will appear after your EFC number, and you'll need to provide tax returns and other documentation to your school's financial aid office.

Step 8. Compare award letters

- ▶ If you're eligible for aid, schools where you are accepted will send you an award letter.
- ▶ Carefully compare amounts and types of aid awarded.
- ▶ To learn more about award letters, visit SallieMae.com/AwardLetters

VISIT SALLIEMAE.COM/FAFSA FOR:

- ▶ Ways to apply
- ▶ Completing your FAFSA
- ▶ Verifying your FAFSA
- ▶ Frequently asked questions
- ▶ Financial aid deadlines
- ▶ Renewing your FAFSA

TIPS:

- You cannot submit the official FAFSA until after January 1; however, the "FAFSA on the Web" worksheet lets you get a jump on gathering information and answering questions well before that date.
- If your family's tax return is not ready for filing, don't put off completing the FAFSA. Estimate the tax information and submit the FAFSA. Be sure to make the corrections later, if necessary.

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