THE FAFSA® PROCESS

Each year, the federal government provides more than $150 billion in financial aid (grants, work-study, and loans) for college or career school. To apply for this aid, you must complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®). Also, state governments and many colleges and career schools use your FAFSA information to award you their aid.

Federal government

State government

Colleges and career schools

REMEMBER

Some schools won't consider you for merit scholarships until you've submitted a FAFSA, so complete one even if you think you won't qualify for federal aid.

RELAX

The FAFSA is designed to be simple to fill out. Tips throughout the application help you understand the questions. Most people finish filling out the FAFSA in less than half an hour!

PREPARING FOR THE FAFSA®

The FAFSA asks questions about you and your finances, so have the information below handy.

Don't have all your info ready yet? That's okay: you can start the FAFSA, save it, and come back later to finish it. (To find out whether you need to report info about your parents, visit StudentAid.gov/dependency.)

GATHER THIS INFORMATION

- Social Security number
- Alien registration number (A# 123-456-789)
- Federal tax information or tax returns
- Records of untaxed income
- Cash, savings, and checking account balances
- Investments other than the home in which you live

FILLING OUT THE FAFSA®

The FAFSA is available starting JANUARY 1. It's important to fill it out as soon as possible to meet school and state FINANCIAL AID DEADLINES.

- If you file taxes BEFORE filling out your FAFSA, you may be able to retrieve and transfer tax information into the form automatically using the Internal Revenue Service Data Retrieval Tool (IRS DRT).
- If you file taxes AFTER filling out your FAFSA, you may be able to use the IRS DRT to correct your FAFSA information.

MEETING FINANCIAL AID DEADLINES

Each state and school has its own FAFSA deadline. Check a college's or career school's deadline on its website or by calling its financial aid office. Most state deadlines are at fafsa.gov/deadlines.htm.

SUBMISSION OPTIONS

- fafsa.gov — Electronic form (fill out at fafsa.gov)
- Mail-in application (download PDF at fafsa.gov or order paper form at www.edpubs.gov)
- Electronic submission by your college or career school (ask if they can submit the FAFSA for you)

PROCESSING THE FAFSA®

After you submit your FAFSA, your information will be sent to the colleges you listed on the form.

PROCESS TIMELINE

- You'll receive an e-mail within A FEW DAYS, letting you know your FAFSA was processed.
- Your college or career school might request additional information from you. Make sure to RESPOND BY ANY DEADLINES.

FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS

AID OFFER $$$

- You'll receive an aid offer from each college or career school you applied to and listed on your FAFSA, stating the amount of aid you could receive at the school.
- Review and compare your offers, and decide which school to attend based on the school's net cost and how well the school suits your needs.

RENEWAL APPLICANTS

AID OFFER $$$

You'll receive an aid offer from your school stating the amount of aid you could receive at the school.

RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID

- Formally accept the school's aid offer—and remember, if you're offered student loans, borrow only as much as you really need.
- Your school will handle your aid. Ask the financial aid office when and how your aid will be paid out, what it'll cover, and how much (if any) money will come directly to you once tuition and fees are paid.

Get FREE assistance and answers at fafsa.gov or 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).