



# FAFSA Completion Guide

The FAFSA and this guide both use “you,” which refers to the student; but in addition to the student, in most cases, a parent will also need to fill out a FAFSA. See inside for details.



## Why submit a FAFSA?

The FAFSA (**Free** Application for Federal Student Aid) is the access point to all financial aid for any education or training after high school—college, technical programs, and more. Every student, regardless of age, should fill out a FAFSA to be eligible for federal grants, the Vermont grant, many scholarships, aid from your college/trade school, work-study programs, and federal loans. *Not* submitting a FAFSA is the same as saying that you can afford to pay the whole cost of college or training yourself.



## Before you begin a FAFSA

... you'll need to create an FSA ID. FSA stands for “federal student aid,” and the ID you create will allow you to confirm your identity whenever you access your financial aid info and electronically sign federal student aid documents (including your FAFSA). Student and parent each need to have a separate ID, because FSA IDs cannot be shared. To create your ID:

- 1 Go to [fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm](https://fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm).
- 2 Enter your email address, then create a user name & password.
- 3 Enter your name, date of birth, Social Security number, and contact info; then choose & answer the challenge questions.
- 4 Confirm your *cell phone number* by using the secure code that will be texted to you at the cell phone number you provided.
- 5 Confirm your *email address* by using the secure code that will be sent to the email address you used for your FSA ID.



## How to submit a FAFSA

Once you have your FSA ID, go to [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov) to submit your FAFSA. Here’s a list of the things that both you and a parent will need in order to complete the application:

- Social Security number**
- FSA ID** for signing the FAFSA electronically
- The **names of the colleges** you’re applying to
- Federal tax returns**, including schedules, W-2s and K-1 form if applicable (You may be able to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool to transfer your federal tax return into your FAFSA; see page 3 for information.)
- Information on any types of income**, even if it isn’t reported on a tax return or you didn’t file taxes
- Bank statements** and records of investments (if applicable)

TOLL FREE  
800-642-3177

BURLINGTON AREA  
655-9602

ONLINE  
[vsac.org](https://vsac.org)

EMAIL  
[info@vsac.org](mailto:info@vsac.org)



The information you submit on the FAFSA is based on your “dependency status.”

- If you’re a *dependent* student, you need to submit your information and the information for your parents.
- If you’re an *independent* student, you’ll report your own information (and your spouse’s, if you’re married).

Are you unsure whether you’re a dependent or independent student? Visit <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out/dependency#dependency-questions>.

If you know, you can proceed by going to **fafsa.gov** to begin your FAFSA. If you’ve never done a FAFSA before, click on the **Start Here** button under “New to the FAFSA Process?”

**TIP** *If you’re a new FAFSA filer, you’ll be prompted to create a Save Key as part of the FAFSA. You and a parent can use your Save Keys to save your work if you need to log out before finishing. When you log back in, your work will be saved in the FAFSA.*

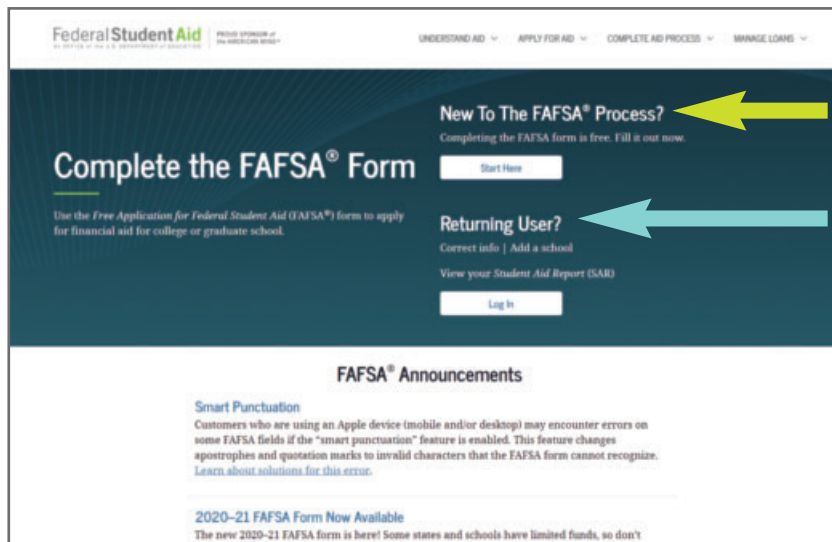
If you weren’t able to finish your FAFSA when you started it (or if you’re doing a FAFSA for the second year of college/trade school), click on the **Log In** button under “Returning User?” and use your FSA ID to log in.

There are lots of ways to get help with your FAFSA.

Within the online form itself, you can click on the question mark next to each data field to show help text.

For general help completing the FAFSA, you can call 1-800-433-3243 (TDD number is 1-800-730-8913).

You can also find answers to FAQs and helpful links at <https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out/help>.



New users

Returning users



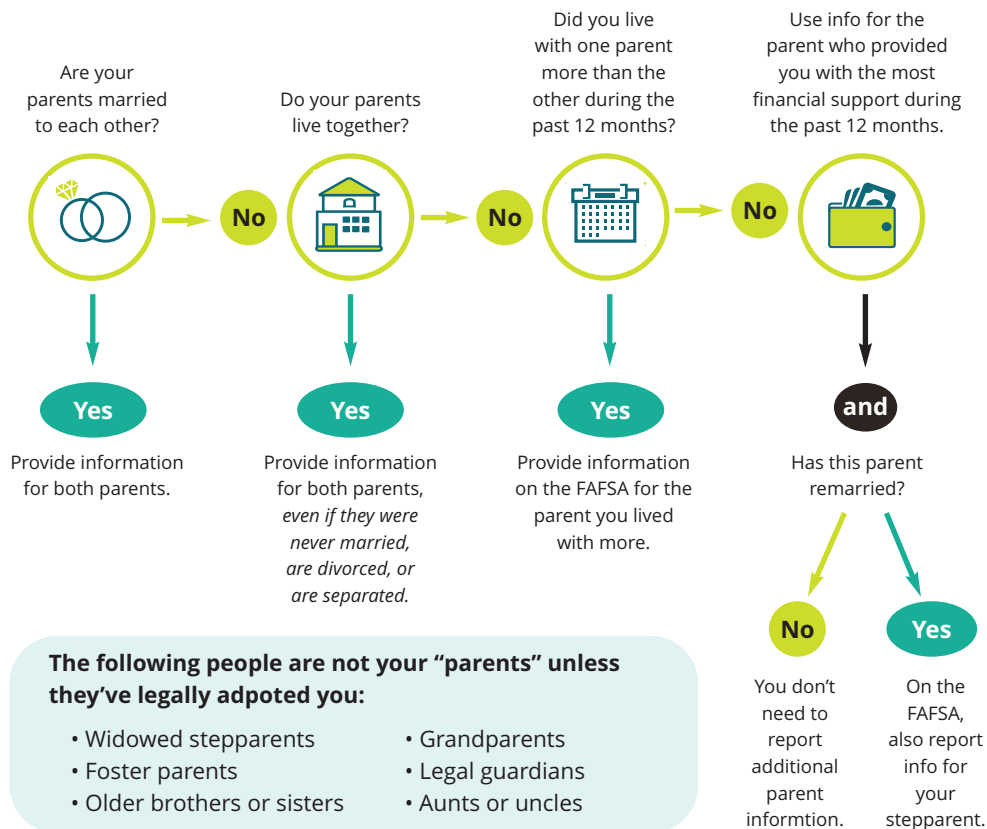
Students (both dependent and independent) should begin here.

Parents should begin here.

## Whose parent information do I use?

Federal student aid programs are based on the belief that it's mainly your and your family's responsibility to pay for your education. The programs assume that a dependent student has the support of parents, so parent information is required (along with the student's information) in order to get a full picture of the family's financial situation. If you're a dependent student, it doesn't mean that your parents are required to pay anything toward your education; this is just a way of looking at everyone in the same way.

If you have questions about which parent's info you should submit, here's a guide:



If you're still not sure whose parent info you should use for the FAFSA, you can call Federal Student Aid toll-free at 800-433-3243.

## Use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool

The FAFSA will ask you to provide information from your tax return. If you filed a U.S tax return, the IRS Data Retrieval Tool can help you transfer the information from your tax return directly into the FAFSA. It's the fastest, most accurate way to input your tax details into the FAFSA. Parents and students can link directly to the IRS website from the FAFSA.

- 1 Click "Link to IRS" within the Financial Information section of the FAFSA.
- 2 Parents: Enter your FSA ID and password.
- 3 Review the information displayed and select "Transfer My Information into the FAFSA."
- 4 Students: Follow the same process if you filed a tax return.



If you have trouble bringing your tax info into your FAFSA from the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, be sure to enter your name and address **exactly** as it appears on the tax return, even using the same capital letters, abbreviations, and punctuation.



## Next steps

Once your FAFSA has been processed, you can log into **fafsa.gov** to view your Student Aid Report (SAR), which is a record of all the data you provided on your FAFSA.

- 1 Review it carefully and follow the instructions to update information or add schools. Your SAR is also accessible online at **fafsa.gov** using your FSA ID.

The information on your SAR is also sent to the colleges you listed on the FAFSA. Each college will receive the same information, but they'll vary widely in the way they use this info. Each college will use your SAR to create a financial aid package for you that may include federal grants, an *estimated* Vermont grant, work-study, federal education loans, and any grants or loans the school can provide.

- 2 The reason an *estimated* Vermont grant may appear on your financial aid package is because you won't receive a Vermont grant *unless you apply* for a Vermont grant. Make sure you go to **vsac.org/grants** to apply for a Vermont grant. You can also link directly to the Vermont grant application from the FAFSA confirmation page, which will show up when you've submitted the FAFSA.

Colleges are often required to verify FAFSA info, and most people who are chosen for verification are picked randomly.

If you're selected for verification, *don't panic*—you haven't done anything wrong—but do respond as soon as you can so your financial aid isn't delayed. The college will let you know what information you need to supply.



## FAFSA Tips

If you're attending college/trade school in	You can submit the FAFSA	Using tax info from this year
July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021	October 1, 2019–June 30, 2021	2018
July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022	October 1, 2020–June 30, 2022	2019
July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023	October 1, 2021–June 30, 2023	2020

- Use a personal email (not one associated with your school) and check it often to respond to important information and instructions from Federal Student Aid and from your school.
- For security, log in with an FSA ID and *not* personal identifiers such as your Social Security number.
- After you sign and submit your FAFSA, you should see a confirmation page. If you don't see this confirmation, double-check that you've clicked the submit button. If you provided an email address, you'll receive a copy of the confirmation page by email. Be sure to keep your confirmation number with your important financial aid information. You'll also see a link on the confirmation page that will bring you to VSAC's website to complete an application for Vermont's grant.
- If your SAR has incorrect information, go to **fafsa.gov** to make corrections. On the FAFSA home page, look for "Returning User" and click the log-in button. Once you've logged in, click on "Make FAFSA Corrections" and follow the instructions.
- Keep track of all of your passwords and user names. You'll need your FSA ID in order to complete the FAFSA and federal loan documents every year you're in college/trade school.
- On the FAFSA, you'll be asked your grade level. High school seniors and students who are beginning college for the first time should choose "Never attended college and 1st year undergraduate," even if you've taken AP or dual enrollment courses.

Also, you'll be asked what degree or certificate you'll be working on. As a first-year college student, you're not in a graduate program, so don't choose this option.