

FAFSA Filing Kit

Everything You Need to Fill Out the FAFSA

Filing the FAFSA isn't as complicated or time-consuming as it seems: in fact, nearly 2/3 of the questions have been eliminated on the newly designed form, and there are many you don't even have to answer on your own! In about the time it takes you to catch up on your Instagram feed—and with only a few pieces of information—you can take the critical first step in getting the money you need to attend college!

Here's a checklist of everything you and your parent need to fill out, sign and submit the FAFSA:

- An [FSA ID](#). You, and whichever parent(s) will be contributors on your FAFSA must create a separate FSA ID by each creating an account on [studentaid.gov](#). Do this first!
- You and your parent's Social Security numbers. If you're not a U.S. Citizen but fall into one of the categories that make you eligible for federal financial aid, you'll also need your A-Number. If your parent doesn't have a Social Security Number, that's ok - just provide their mailing address.
- Driver's license (if you have one).
- List of schools to which you want to send the FAFSA. Starting this year, you can list up to 20! They'll automatically receive your FAFSA results electronically, and use them to determine the types and amounts of financial aid you may receive.
- If applicable, other records of money earned, and records of the value of student and parents assets and investments (not including retirement funds).

In previous years, you would have needed your and your parents' federal income tax returns for the "prior-prior" year. But now, federal tax information (FTI) will automatically populate in your FAFSA once you and your parent(s) have provided consent. One less thing to have to do!

Want to know more?

[Check out the Federal Student Aid YouTube channel](#) for more info on the big changes to the FAFSA that make it easier and faster to fill out. Your school's financial aid office will help you with any questions you have at any time in the process, so don't hesitate to contact them as well.

File your FAFSA now!

Our Office of Financial Aid will work with you to ensure you have access to the resources you need to pay for college. Our goal is to make sure all qualified applicants can invest in an education here.

If you have any questions about financial aid, need help filling out the FAFSA or encounter special financial circumstances your family is experiencing, please contact us.

**Don't forget to list
our FAFSA Code:**

002788



Office of Financial Aid
P.O. Box 2010
Niagara University, N.Y. 14109

716.286.8686
finaid@niagara.edu
niagara.edu/financialaid

FAFSA Facts and Fiction

Get the Truth – and the Money You Need for College

Don't let misconceptions about the FAFSA prevent you from getting the money you need for college. Here's the truth behind some questions you might have about filling out this critical financial aid form

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VS

FACT

I need a computer to file the FAFSA.



You don't! You can access studentaid.gov on a mobile device or request a print-out of the FAFSA PDF (in English or Spanish) by calling 1.800.4.FED.AID (1.800.433.3243).

I need to pay a fee to file the FAFSA.



Filing the FAFSA is free – it's right there in the name! Avoid any website or mobile app that requires a payment – that means it isn't the [official FAFSA site](https://studentaid.gov).

It takes a really long time to fill out the FAFSA.



The simplified FAFSA form asks nearly 2/3 fewer questions than the old form, and many of the questions are answered by importing federal tax information (FTI) directly from the IRS, so you don't even have to answer them yourself! The new form is also easier to understand. If you have questions, there's step-by-step help right in the form and on studentaid.gov.

The FAFSA asks for a lot of information and I won't be able to find it.



The information the FAFSA collects includes things you can easily access, like your Social Security number, bank statements and driver's license. You don't even have to have your tax forms on hand: there's a tool that can pull them in automatically for you!

I need both parents' information to complete the FAFSA.



It depends. There are many situations when you only need one parent's information to complete the FAFSA – and you might not even need that. The FAFSA considers many different family situations, and so will your college's financial aid office. The FAFSA form will have a "[parent wizard](#)" that will guide you through which parent(s) will need to provide information on the FAFSA.

I don't need to fill out the FAFSA.



The FAFSA not only enables you to apply for federal grants like the Pell Grant and low-interest loans, it's also the form that states and individual colleges use to determine your need-based aid. Check the [FAFSA submission deadline for your state](#).

I need to be a U.S. citizen to be eligible for financial aid.



Students who fall into certain non-citizen statuses are eligible for federal financial aid. [See a list here](#). Your parents' citizenship does NOT impact your eligibility.

My family must have filed their tax returns before I can file the FAFSA.



The FAFSA uses what's called "prior-prior year taxes, and starting this year, federal tax information (FTI) will automatically populate in your FAFSA once you and your parent(s) have provided consent.

It's so important not to let false impressions steer you away from filing the FAFSA – this form is the key to getting the money you need to attend college.

If you're confused about something you hear or read, need help filling out the FAFSA, or have questions about unique financial circumstances, just ask us! Our Office of Financial Aid will work with you to ensure you have access to the resources and information you need to pay for college.

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The Top 5 Sources for Financial Aid Advice

Your favorite influencer might be your go-to for product reviews and tips, but they're probably not the best place to get financial aid advice. And unless your family is deep into the educational funding world, they're not the ideal sources either. **Luckily, there are many reliable places to turn to for the real deal on the changes to the financial aid process – and for help. Here are 5 of the best:**

1

Studentaid.gov

The home of federal student aid and the FAFSA form. There's also a new Financial Aid Estimator Tool, which gives you a first look at how much aid you could be eligible for when you answer a few quick questions about your family and yourself.

2

Federal Student Aid YouTube Channel

This channel is run by the division of the U.S. Department of Education that administers the FAFSA, so you can trust the information there. It's presented in bite-sized videos that make it easy to focus on just the area you need help with, so you don't have to skip through a lot of yadda yadda yadda.

3

College financial aid offices

While federal and state aid policies are consistent across schools, every college's aid policies are different. Be sure you talk to the financial aid offices at the schools you're considering attending – they're there to provide support for you throughout the process!

4

Counselors/Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

College counselors at your school and non-profit CBOs are there to help you navigate all aspects of college, from academics to social to finances. Be sure to check their event schedules, as many high schools and CBOs hold financial aid information nights regularly.

5

Trusted publications and websites

How do you know what's legit? Think entities like the College Board, College Navigator, US News, NACAC (the National Association of College Admissions Counselors) – names you know and that have been around. It's always a good idea to check multiple sources, and to confirm anything you read elsewhere with studentaid.gov and your college's financial aid office.

Remember, any site or company that charges you money to file the FAFSA is a scam.

There have been a lot of critical changes to the financial aid process as a result of the FAFSA Simplification Act, so it's important to use only trustworthy sources for information and help. Don't hesitate to reach out to our Financial Aid office if you have any questions about anything you read or hear!

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How to Speak Financial Aid

Financial aid has a language all its own—one with lots of acronyms and industry-specific terms that can sound scary. This glossary will take some of the mystery out of these terms and help you make the best decisions about your awards.

Student Aid Index (SAI): Used to determine a student's eligibility for federal financial aid and most other types of financial aid they can receive. It replaces the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and is calculated using slightly different methods.

Cost of Attendance (COA): An estimate of how much it costs to attend a college. The COA includes the price of tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies and other expenses associated with attending that school. [Learn about our COA here.](#)

Financial need: The difference between Student Aid Index (SAI) and a college's Cost of Attendance (COA).

Net price: How much it will cost you to attend a college for one year after your scholarships and grants, loans and work-study subtracted from the COA. Use our [Net Price Calculator](#) to estimate your net price.

FSA ID: Your FSA ID is your user name and password to access or correct your FAFSA information online. You and your parent, and all contributors, need separate FSA IDs. You'll also see this referred to as creating an account on studentaid.gov.

FAFSA Submission Summary: This report shows you what data is on your FAFSA, some information about the aid for which you're eligible and your Student Aid Index (SAI).

Subsidized loan: A need-based loan which is interest-free while you're in school.

Unsubsidized loan: A loan for which you don't have to demonstrate financial need, but on which interest will accrue while you are in school. You are not required to make payments while you are enrolled, but you may choose to do so.

Scholarship/grant: A monetary gift that doesn't have to be repaid. It is provided by the federal or state government, the institution, and/or private organizations. It can be one-time or renewable, and based on grades, talents or other criteria.

Work-study: A part-time job for students with financial need. [Find out more about our work-study options.](#)

Contributor: A contributor Is anyone required to provide consent and approval to have their federal tax information (FTI) transferred directly from the IRS into the FAFSA form, as well as a signature on the form. This may include you, the student, your spouse, a biological or adoptive parent, or a stepparent.



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For more common terms you'll see throughout the financial aid process, [check out this glossary](#) from the Department of Education.

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