

### FAFSA Tips

Q: Who should complete the FAFSA, the student or the parents?

A: The FAFSA is technically that of the student as he or she is the one applying for aid. However, from a practical standpoint, parents can sign in and create the FAFSA account for their student. While there is certainly a place for students to be responsible for the college process, you should think twice about making them responsible for the FAFSA and other financial aid information. The deadlines are non-negotiable and most of the information is about parent income and assets so it makes sense to have adult supervision. We suggest you do it yourself. If you choose this route, enter your email address when registering because you want to be sure you are getting the information that the government will be sending.

Q: What if the parents are separated or divorced?

A: You will use the financial information for the custodial parent. For financial aid purposes, that is the parent with whom you lived the majority of the time in the last twelve months ending on the date the FAFSA is filed. Note that this is not necessarily the same as the parent who has legal custody. If you did not live with one parent more than the other, the parent who provided you with the most financial support during those twelve months is the custodial parent.

Q: What if my parents say they will not pay for college?

A: The government doesn't care about this and will still require information from your parents. This obviously is a messy situation and how you resolve it will depend on the specifics of why your parents have adopted such an attitude. Sometimes, parents just don't understand the necessity of the information to the process.

Q: I'm sure we won't get financial aid. Do we still need to file the FAFSA?

A: There are two schools of thought on this. One says that if you are sure of your estimates and you don't want to access federal loans, there is simply no point in going through the hassle. The other says that many parents don't file the FAFSA each year who should file. Unless you earn more than \$350,000 a year, have no interest in getting federal student or parent loans, and will have only one child in college at a time then you should file.

Remember, for FAFSA purposes student loans are considered "aid". They are not aid. They are loans. So when you hear someone say that you need the FAFSA for aid, that's true, but they are usually talking about loans.

Q: Online forms make me nervous. Can we practice the FAFSA?

A: Yes, there is an excellent FAFSA estimator you can use. See the link below.

Q: I'm not interested in loans or need-based aid, but I am interested in merit aid. Do I still need to file the FAFSA?

A: Maybe. This is a school by school matter. Most schools do not want to FAFSA to consider you for merit aid, but some do, so check with the financial aid office to be sure.

Q: How do the FAFSA results compare to Net Price Calculator results?

A: The FAFSA is official while the NPC is an estimate, but the results should be close. If yours are not, contact the financial aid office of the college in question and ask them for assistance.

Q: How do I complete the FAFSA?

A: First, you will need a PIN for the parent (only one parent) and the student. You can get those PINs at the website below. Save them, they will be used as your official signature, and you'll need them again every year.

Second, go to the FAFSA website below and register the student. You can begin completing the form online and save your work and return later. As you go through the form, you'll need your child's SSN and birthday, use your email address, and select a password.

If you do not have your 2012 income tax return, you can estimate the information now and then make revisions once you file. Your official financial aid will be based on your revised numbers, but you'll want to make good estimates.

Enter the school codes for the colleges you want to submit the FAFSA to. You can come back and add more schools later. Colleges can see the names of the other schools receiving your information.

Q: What can I expect after I file?

A: You will receive an email of your Student Aid Report (SAR) in a few days. The SAR lists all of the financial information used to calculate the EFC so if you don't want to share your financial information, you probably don't want to share your SAR. The EFC will be listed at the top of the SAR.

Helpful links:

PINS

[www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov)

FAFSA

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

FAFSA Practice Estimator

[www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov)

Detailed FAFSA Instructions

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/2012-13CTF.pdf>

CSS Profile

<https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp>

Net Price Calculators for Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina

<http://www.thecollegecompanion.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/cfg-NPC-List-VA-NC-SC.pdf>