

FAFSA 411

Your Guide to Financial Aid

If you need financial aid to help you pay for college you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at studentaid.gov

Pay Attention to the Deadlines

OCT 1 The FAFSA will be available on Oct. 1. Get your FAFSA done as soon as possible.

DEC 1 Priority date for most Montana schools. Check with your school's financial aid department to confirm the deadline.



PRO TIP: Missing the priority date could affect the amount of money you get for financial aid (federal work-study, and state and institutional grants and scholarships). **Don't Chance it!**

Create a FSA ID at studentaid.gov

Create it ahead of time. It only takes about 15 minutes. FSA ID will be matched with Social Security information. **Both you and one of your parents** (if you're a dependent student) **will need one.**

Gather Information

Have your documents ready. Review our list of documents and have them ready when you fill out the FAFSA.

- ☐ **FSA ID** (both parent and student)
- ☐ **Driver's license** (if you have one)
- ☐ **Social security number** (parent and student)
- ☐ **Prior, prior year federal tax returns, W2 untaxed income records** (i.e. the 2026-2027 FAFSA, would use the 2024 tax information)
- ☐ **Information on savings and investments** (if applicable)
- ☐ **List of the school(s)** you are interested in attending

File the FAFSA at studentaid.gov

The FAFSA won't take long to complete and requires **Both parent and student information.**

Direct Data Exchange (DDX)

The **Direct Data Exchange** inputs your tax information directly to the FAFSA. Everyone is **required** to consent to DDX, even if they didn't file taxes.



PRO TIP: Make sure your college(s) of choice are listed on your FAFSA. if corrections or updates are needed, complete them as soon as possible.

FAFSA Submissions Summary (FSS)

After you submit the FAFSA form, **You'll receive a FAFSA Submissions Summary.** The FSS provides an estimated **Student Aid Index (SAI)** and estimated Pell Grant and student loan eligibility using information from your FAFSA.

Financial Aid Award Offer

After your school receives your information, they send you a financial aid award offer that explains how much funding you are eligible to receive.



PRO TIP: Look at all aid offers, choose the best fit, and accept only the loan amount you truly need.

Learn more about paying for school



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