



Greg Frieder/Getty Images

DO YOU NEED MONEY FOR COLLEGE OR CAREER SCHOOL?

Apply for Federal Student Aid

What is federal student aid?

It's money from the federal government that helps you pay for college, career school, or graduate school expenses. Aid is available through grants, work-study, and loans. Every student who meets certain eligibility requirements can get some type of federal student aid, regardless of age or family income. Before you apply, get an estimate of how much aid you could get at StudentAid.gov/fafsa/estimate.

How do I apply for aid?

You need to complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form at fafsa.gov. Students and parents will need an FSA ID to sign the form online. You'll also use your FSA ID to access information about your financial aid on U.S. Department of Education websites. You can create an FSA ID in advance or while you fill out the FAFSA form. To find out more about the FSA ID, visit StudentAid.gov/fsaid.

When should I apply?

Each October, the FAFSA form is available for the next school year. You'll need to reapply for aid every year you are in school. Here's a summary of key dates for submitting the FAFSA form depending on when you plan to go to school:

IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND COLLEGE FROM

JULY 1, 2018–JUNE 30, 2019

— OR —

JULY 1, 2019–JUNE 30, 2020

YOU WILL SUBMIT THIS FAFSA FORM

2018–19 FAFSA FORM

— OR —

2019–20 FAFSA FORM

YOU CAN SUBMIT THE FAFSA FORM FROM

OCT. 1, 2017–JUNE 30, 2019

— OR —

OCT. 1, 2018–JUNE 30, 2020

Who gets federal student aid?

Some of the most basic eligibility requirements for students are that you must

- demonstrate financial need (for most programs);
- be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen;
- have a valid Social Security number;
- be registered with Selective Service if you're a male between the ages of 18 and 25;
- be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an eligible degree or certificate program;
- be enrolled at least half-time (for most programs); and
- maintain satisfactory academic progress in college, career school, or graduate school; show you're qualified to obtain a college or career school education by
 - » having a high school diploma or a state recognized equivalent (for example the General Educational Development (GED) certificate); or
 - » completing a high school education in a home-school setting approved under state law; or
 - » enrolling in an eligible career pathways program.



Are you considered a dependent or independent student when it comes to the FAFSA® form? Find out at StudentAid.gov/dependency.

THE FAFSA IS FREE!

Completing and submitting the FAFSA form is free and quick, and it gives you access to the largest sources of financial aid to pay for college or career school—federal, state, and school resources.

See the full list of eligibility requirements at StudentAid.gov/eligibility.

READY TO FILL OUT THE FAFSA® FORM? GO TO FAFSA.GOV!

I completed the FAFSA® form. Now what?

After you submit your FAFSA form, you'll receive a *Student Aid Report (SAR)* that summarizes the data you submitted. If you provided a valid email address in your application, you'll receive an email with instructions on how to access an online copy of your SAR within three days (if you apply at fafsa.gov) or three weeks (if you mail in a paper FAFSA form).

When you receive your SAR, review it to make sure you didn't make any mistakes on your FAFSA form.

- If you don't need to make any changes to the information listed on your SAR, just keep it for your records.
- To find out how to correct mistakes, or to update your tax data or other information in your FAFSA form, visit StudentAid.gov/fafsa/next-steps/accept-aid or contact the school to which you are applying.

The information in your SAR will be provided to the schools you listed on your FAFSA form. You will receive an aid offer from the schools at which you were accepted for admission.

What's an aid offer and how much aid will I get?

If you applied for admission to a college or career school you listed on your FAFSA form, that school will get your FAFSA information. The school will calculate your aid and send you an aid offer (often electronically).

Most schools will wait to send you an aid offer only after they accept you for admission. The aid offer will tell you how much aid you're eligible to receive at that school and will include the types and amounts of financial aid you may receive from federal, state, private, and school sources. This combination of help from different sources is your financial aid package. How much aid you receive depends on some factors, including

- cost of attendance (for each school);
- *Expected Family Contribution (EFC)*—the EFC does not represent a dollar amount but, instead, it's a number used to calculate how much financial aid you're eligible to receive based on your FAFSA information;
- year in school; and
- enrollment status (e.g., full-time, half-time, etc.).

You can compare school aid offers and see which school is most affordable once financial aid is taken into account. Contact the school's financial aid office if you have any questions about the aid being offered to you. For more information on how aid is calculated, visit StudentAid.gov/how-calculated.

HOW WILL I RECEIVE MY AID?

Your college or career school—not the U.S. Department of Education—will distribute your aid. In most cases, your federal student aid will be applied directly to your school account. The financial aid staff at your school will explain exactly how and when your aid will be disbursed (paid out).



DO I HAVE TO REPAY MY LOANS?

Yes. Student loans, unlike grants and work-study, are borrowed money that must be repaid, with interest, just like car loans and home mortgages. You cannot have these loans canceled because you didn't like the education you received, didn't get a job in your field of study, or are having financial difficulty. So think about the amount you'll have to repay before you take out a loan and only borrow the amount you need. Learn more about loan repayment at StudentAid.gov/repay.

DON'T LET YOUR INTEREST CAPITALIZE!

If you have unsubsidized or PLUS loans, then interest accumulates on these loans before you begin repayment (e.g., while you are in school). Consider paying interest on your federal student loans while you're in school, and during grace, deferment, and forbearance periods to avoid capitalization (the addition of unpaid interest to the principal balance of your loan). Capitalization increases your loan balance, and interest will then accrue on that higher principal amount.