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## 7 Things You Need Before You Fill Out the FAFSA (<http://blog.ed.gov/2016/09/7-things-need-before-fill-out-fafsa/>)



If you need financial aid to help you pay for college, you must complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(http://fafsa.gov/\)](http://fafsa.gov/) (FAFSA®). The 2017–18 FAFSA is available now! The FAFSA launched on October 1, 2016—three months earlier than usual—at 12 a.m. Central time. You should fill it out as soon as possible on the official government site, [fafsa.gov \(http://fafsa.gov/\)](http://fafsa.gov/).

To speed up the FAFSA process, get prepared early. Here is what you'll need to fill out the FAFSA:

*If you're a dependent student, you will need certain information for your parents as well; we've indicated each of those items with an asterisk (\*) below.*

### 1. Your FSA ID\*

An FSA ID is a username and password that you must use to log in to certain U.S. Department of Education (ED) websites, including [fafsa.gov \(https://fafsa.gov/\)](http://fafsa.gov/).

- Anyone who plans to fill out the 2017–18 FAFSA should create an FSA ID as soon as possible.
- If you are required to provide parent information on your FAFSA, your parent should create an FSA ID too.
- Because your FSA ID is equivalent to your signature, parents and students each need to create their own FSA IDs using separate email addresses. Parents should not create an FSA ID for their child and vice versa.
- In some situations, you may need to wait up to three days to use your FSA ID after creating it. If you want to avoid FAFSA delays, [create your FSA ID now \(http://studentaid.gov/fsaid\)](http://studentaid.gov/fsaid).



Create an FSA ID

<http://studentaid.gov/fsaid>

## 2 Your Social Security number\*

You can find the number on your Social Security card. If you don't have access to it, and don't know where it is, ask your parent or legal guardian or [get a new or replacement Social Security card \(https://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/\)](https://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/) from the Social Security Administration. If you are not a U.S. citizen, but meet Federal Student Aid's [basic eligibility requirements \(https://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/basic-criteria\)](https://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/basic-criteria), you'll need your Alien Registration number.

## 3. Your driver's license number

If you don't have a driver's license, then don't worry about this step.

## 4. Your 2015 tax records\*

Beginning with the 2017–18 FAFSA, you will be required to report income information from an earlier tax year.

- On the 2017–18 FAFSA, you (and your parents, as appropriate) will report your 2015 income information, rather than your 2016 income information.
- Since you'll already have filed your 2015 taxes by the time the FAFSA launches, you'll be able to import your tax information into the FAFSA right away using the [IRS Data Retrieval Tool \(http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/help/irshlp9.htm\)](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/help/irshlp9.htm). (No more logging back in to update after filing taxes!)
- You **do not** have the option to report your 2016 tax information. We understand that for some families, 2015 income doesn't accurately reflect your current financial situation. If you have experienced a loss in income since the 2015 tax year, you should complete the FAFSA with the info it asks for (2015), and then contact each of the schools to which you're applying to explain and document the change in income. They have the ability to assess your situation and make adjustments to your FAFSA.
- You cannot update your 2017–18 FAFSA with your 2016 tax information after filing 2016 taxes. 2015 information is what's required. No updates necessary; no updates allowed.

## 5. Records of your untaxed income\*

The FAFSA questions about untaxed income may or may not apply to you, but they include things like child support received, interest income, and veterans noneducation benefits. On the 2017–18 FAFSA, you'll report 2015 tax or calendar year information when asked these questions. Parents can find specific details [here \(https://fafsa.ed.gov/fotw1617/help/needhelpeoe4.htm\)](https://fafsa.ed.gov/fotw1617/help/needhelpeoe4.htm). Students can find details [here \(https://fafsa.ed.gov/fotw1617/help/needhelpeoe2.htm\)](https://fafsa.ed.gov/fotw1617/help/needhelpeoe2.htm).

## 6. Records of all your assets (money)\*

This includes savings and checking account balances, as well as investments such as stocks and bonds and real estate. You should report the current amounts as of the date you sign the FAFSA, rather than the 2015 tax year amounts.

## 7. List of the school(s) you are interested in attending

Two-thirds of precollege FAFSA applicants list only one school on their applications. For many, that could be a mistake.

- **Be sure to add any college you're considering, even if you haven't applied or been accepted yet.** This is more important than ever now that the FAFSA is launching earlier! Even if there is only a slight chance you'll apply to a college, add it to your FAFSA. You can always remove schools later if you decide not to apply, but if you wait to add a school, you could miss out on first come, first served financial aid.
- The schools you list on your FAFSA will automatically receive your FAFSA results electronically. They will use your FAFSA information to determine the types and amounts of financial aid you may receive.
- If you add a school to your FAFSA and later decide not to apply for admission to that school, that's OK. The school likely won't offer you aid until you've been accepted anyway.
- You can list up to 10 schools on your FAFSA at a time. [If you're applying to more than 10 schools, here's what you should do \(https://fafsa.ed.gov/help/fotwfaq14.htm\)](https://fafsa.ed.gov/help/fotwfaq14.htm).

**TIP:** To be considered for state aid, several states require you to list schools in a particular order (for instance, you might need to list a state school first). [Find out whether your state has a requirement for the order in which you list schools on your FAFSA \(http://studentaid.gov/fafsa/filling-out/school-list#order\)](http://studentaid.gov/fafsa/filling-out/school-list#order).