

# FAFSA CHECKLIST: Have These Documents On-Hand

Updated September 2017

## GET IT... GOT IT... CHECK IT OFF~

Having the following information and forms on-hand will help you fill out the 2018-19 FAFSA:

- Your Social Security Number (can be found on Social Security card)
- Your driver's license (if any)
- W-2 Forms from two years prior (2016) and other records of any money earned
- Your (and/or your parents') Federal Income Tax Return from two years prior — IRS Form 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ, foreign tax return, or tax return from Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated State of Micronesia
- Any untaxed income records for two years prior (2016) — e.g., payments to tax deferred pension and savings plans, tax exempt interest and child support received in 2016
- Records of taxable earnings from Federal Work-Study or other need-based work programs in 2016
- Records of any grants, scholarships, and fellowship aid that was included in your or your parents' 2016 adjusted gross income (AGI)
- Any current bank statements
- Any current business and investment mortgage information, business and farm records, stock, bonds and other investment records
- Documentation that you are a U.S. permanent resident or other eligible noncitizen, if applicable

If you have questions about the application, contact the financial aid office at the college you currently attend or wish to attend. They can assist you in finding free help to complete the FAFSA—don't hesitate to call them!

# Avoid Common Errors

Mistakes can delay your application and limit the amount of aid you are eligible to receive. To avoid errors, carefully read all of the questions on the FAFSA. Some of the most common FAFSA errors are:

- Leaving blank fields: Too many blanks may cause miscalculations and an application rejection. Enter a '0' or 'not applicable' instead of leaving a blank.
- Using commas or decimal points in numeric fields: Always round to the nearest dollar.
- Listing an incorrect Social Security Number or driver's license number: Double-check and triple-check these entries to ensure accuracy. If your parents do not have Social Security Numbers, list 000-00-0000. Do not make up a number or include a Taxpayer Identification Number.
- Failing to use your legal name: Your name must be listed on your FAFSA as it appears on your Social Security card. Don't enter nicknames or other variations on your name.
- Entering the wrong address: Don't enter a temporary campus or summer address as your permanent address.
- Entering the wrong federal income tax paid amount: This amount is on your income tax return forms from two years prior, not your W-2 form(s). Learn more about using prior-year tax data on the FAFSA and [watch our short video](#) to understand how you'll benefit from this change. (<https://www.nasfaa.org/ppystudents>)
- Listing Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) as equal to total income from working: AGI and total income from working are not necessarily the same. In most cases, the AGI is larger than the total income from working.
- Incorrectly filing income taxes as head of household: If there is an error in the head of household filing status, the school will need an amended tax return to be filed with the IRS before paying out aid awards.
- Listing marital status incorrectly: The Department of Education wants to know your marital status on the day you sign the FAFSA. If you are in a legally recognized same-sex marriage, you will need to provide your spouse's information as well.
- Listing parent marital status incorrectly: If your custodial parent has remarried, you'll need to include the stepparent's information on the FAFSA. If you have two parents in a legally-recognized same-sex marriage, you'll need to list both parents (one as Parent 1, and one as Parent 2)
- Failure to list both parents if they live together: If both your legal parents (defined as biological or adoptive parents) live in the same household, you are required to list both parents on the FAFSA even if they are not married.
- Failure to report unborn children: If you have a child that will be born before or during the award year and you will provide the child with more than half of his or her support, count that child as a member of the household.
- Failing to count yourself as a student: The student completing the FAFSA must count himself or herself as a member of the household attending college during the award year.
- Failing to register with Selective Service: If you are a male, aged 18 to 26, you must register with Selective Service. Failure to register will make you ineligible for federal student aid.
- Forgetting to list the college: Obtain the Federal School Code for the college you plan on attending and list it along with any other schools you've applied to attend.
- Forgetting to sign and date: If you're filling out the paper FAFSA, be sure to sign it.
- Sending in a copy of your income tax returns: You do not need to include a copy of your tax returns with your FAFSA. Any information sent with your FAFSA will be destroyed. In addition, do not write any notes in the margins of your FAFSA.