

FAFSA “Cheat Sheet” for Students

Hints:

- You don't have to wait for you parents to file their taxes. Apply early and use an estimate income or the previous year's tax info. Then go back and correct it later, once their taxes are filed. The application is available online October 1st.
- Make sure you are on the correct website- www.fafsa.ed.gov. There are lots of copycat sites that will charge a fee... DO NOT PAY!! The FAFSA is FREE!!
- Make sure you are completing the correct application- for example, class of 2017 should complete the 2017-2018 application (it refers to the year you will be using it).
- You DO NOT have to enter your driver's license information.
- FSA ID: You and your parent must both have one in order to electronically begin and sign the application. If you have a FAFSA PIN number, you will be able to link your PIN to the new FSA ID.
- Use the NEXT and PREVIOUS buttons, NOT the back and forward arrows. Back and forward arrows will log you out and you'll lose data you've already entered.
- Make sure when you are answering questions, you note what section you are in (student info vs. parent info)!
- If parents are undocumented, enter 000-00-0000 for SS#, even if they claimed income and file taxes. DO NOT USE A TAX ID NUMBER FOR THIS PURPOSE (tax id's start with a 9). An error message will appear, but just verify that it is correct (click 'check for errors' then click 'next' and it will allow you to move on).
- If you are undocumented, but have a SS# via DACA (Deferred Action)- YOU MUST COMPLETE DREAM ACT APPLICATION, NOT FAFSA.
- Make sure to enter '0' for financial information if applicable. DON'T LEAVE BOXES BLANK.
- Data Retrieval Tool- You can use this tool if your parents have filed taxes electronically at least two weeks before. The DRT allows you to pull tax info directly from the IRS- it prevents errors and avoids a request for a tax transcript. USE IT IF YOU CAN. If you can't, you can just use your parents' tax forms (1040).
- Selective Service- All male students (18-25) MUST be registered to receive aid. If not, NO AID. If you have not yet registered, or are unsure, just check 'yes, register me' on the FAFSA.
- If you are a high school senior, make sure to choose 'Never attended college/1st year' for your grade level, even if you are dual-enrolled (it's still considered high school for FAFSA purposes).
- High School Diploma- You should indicate that you have received a diploma if you expect to receive one by the end of the school year.
- Work-study- Best answer is YES!!! It doesn't obligate you to accept work, and you will still have to find the work-study yourself, once you get on campus.
- Housing- When choosing the type of housing at each school you have entered in the FAFSA, you should choose either 'On campus' or 'Off campus.' 'With parents' is an option, but you may not get as much aid if you choose that, so if that is the case, just choose 'Off campus.'

- Household size- Household size and exemptions ARE NOT necessarily the same. Exemptions are counting previous year, and household size refers to the school year for which you are applying for aid. Household size counts anyone living in the household who receives more than 50% of their support from a dependent student's parents.
- Parents' Financial Information- Only include information from parent, stepparent, or adoptive parents. DO NOT INCLUDE info from legal guardians, grandparents, siblings, aunts, or uncles. If parents are divorced, include income from parent you live with the majority of the time or who provides the majority of your financial support.
- Eligible to file a 1040A or 1040EZ- Yes, if your parent makes less than \$100,000 and does not itemize deductions. No, if your parent itemizes deductions or makes more than \$100,000.
- College Codes- Limited to 10, so list schools you are most interested in attending. If you want to go to more than 10 schools, a) give DRN number to school you did not list (it's on confirmation page of FAFSA application), or b) list 10 schools, wait for your SAR to arrive, then correct the SAR by replacing some or all of the original schools with other schools, or c) call 1-800-433-3243 and provide your DRN to request a change to your SAR, or d) use your FSA ID to login to www.fafsa.ed.gov and click 'make FAFSA corrections.' NOTE: any changes/corrections to FAFSA will only go to second set of schools.

Common Errors:

- Name does not match SS card exactly. If your name has a suffix, such as Jr. or III, include a space between your last name and the suffix. **DOUBLE CHECK YOUR NAME AND SS# TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE CORRECT!**
- Put same amount for AGI and income tax. On the tax form, the AGI is on the 1st page of the 1040 at the bottom (line 37) and income paid is 2nd page of the 1040 toward middle of page under 'other tax.' It will say in teeny print 'total tax.' Yes, it can sometimes be a '0.'
- Not following up with correct tax info. Make sure if you are estimating income, you **MUST GO BACK AND CORRECT AFTER FILING TAXES.** When you go back to make the correction, you can use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool that will automatically link the required info from the IRS.
- Forgot to submit FAFSA. Once you have agreed to the terms and 'signed' the FAFSA, you must hit 'submit.' A confirmation page will pop up to let you know it submitted successfully.
- Didn't enter exact same name and address and filing status when using IRS DRT link. You must enter the **EXACT** same name, address, and filing status that is on the income tax forms (1040), or it won't allow you to use the DRT to transfer info. Also, **DO NOT** type over or correct any info that is electronically transferred- leave the numbers alone.
- Not logging back in at a later date to check the status. Sometimes, there **CAN** be **ERRORS**, even if you have received the confirmation page/email. **ALWAYS** log back in (a week or so after submitting) and click on "View my SAR" to double-check that you didn't make any errors that need corrected!