



A Guide to Financial Aid

Better FAFSA

2024 – 2025

What's Next for Students After
Submitting the FAFSA



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How to Check the Status of Your FAFSA Form

You can check the status of your 2024 – 25 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) form by:

1. logging in and
2. finding your application status in the Status Center under “My Activity,” which displays after you log in if you have already started or completed a FAFSA form.

The status of your FAFSA form will be one of the following:

- **Draft:** Your section of the FAFSA form is incomplete.
- **In Progress:** You provided your consent, approval, and signature to your section of the FAFSA form, but the FAFSA form has not been submitted yet.
- **In Review:** Your FAFSA form was submitted but hasn’t been processed yet.
- **Action Required:** You are missing your consent and approval or signature or the FAFSA form was processed, but a correction is required.
- **Processed:** Your application was processed successfully. No further action is needed.
- **Closed:** Your FAFSA form was never submitted and can no longer be submitted because the federal FAFSA deadline passed.

Note: If you submitted a paper 2024 – 25 FAFSA form, you can check the status of your form once it is processed. Federal Student Aid will begin processing paper 2024 – 25 forms in July.

To check the disbursement status of your federal student aid, contact your college’s or career school’s financial aid office.

How to Review and Correct Your FAFSA Form

Filling out and submitting your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) form is an important step in the journey to paying for college or career/trade school. We'll walk you through the actions you need to take to stay on track toward accepting and receiving your aid.

Make Sure Your 2024 – 25 FAFSA Form Was Processed

Check the status of your form by logging in to your StudentAid.gov account and using the information on the previous page to determine the status of your application.

Review Your FAFSA Submission Summary

The FAFSA Submission Summary for the 2024 – 25 award year (July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025) is a summary of the FAFSA data you submitted. You (the student) will get your FAFSA Submission Summary after your FAFSA form is processed. Look over your FAFSA Submission Summary carefully, make sure you didn't make a mistake on your FAFSA form, and make corrections to your FAFSA data if necessary.

What Not to Expect From the FAFSA Submission Summary

The FAFSA Submission Summary won't tell you how much financial aid you'll get. Also, if you provided consent and approval to obtain your federal tax information from the IRS, the FAFSA Submission Summary won't show the details of your (or parent) income and tax information.

Provide Required Verification

You might see a note on your FAFSA Submission Summary saying you've been selected for verification; or your school might contact you to inform you that you've been selected. Verification is the process your school uses to confirm that the data reported on your FAFSA form is accurate. If you're selected for verification, your school will request additional documentation that supports the information you reported.

Don't assume you're being accused of doing anything wrong. Some people are selected for verification at random; and some schools verify all students' FAFSA forms. All you need to do is provide the documentation your school asks for – and be sure to do so by the school's deadline, or you won't be able to get federal student aid.

In most cases, you won't have to verify income and tax information. However, if you are selected for verification, the school may ask you to submit a tax transcript or other documentation to confirm the information you reported.

Correct Mistakes or Make Updates to Your 2024 – 25 FAFSA Form

Correct Mistakes

After your application has been processed, you can correct your FAFSA form online or on paper.

Make Updates

While most information cannot be changed on the FAFSA form, some information must be updated if it changes.

How to Correct or Update Your FAFSA Form

Most of the questions on the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) form want to know your situation as of the day you sign the application. However, there are some instances in which you'll want to (or be required to) change the information you reported.

What kinds of changes can I make to my FAFSA form once it's been processed?

Corrections: If You Made a Mistake

If you made a mistake in what you reported on the FAFSA form you'll need to make a correction.

Corrections: If FAFSA Form is Missing a Contributor's Consent and Approval

If your FAFSA form is missing a contributor's consent and approval, your contributor must do the following:

1. Log in and go to their account Dashboard.
2. Select the FAFSA form that indicates "Action Required" under the "My Activity" section.
3. Select "Approve."
4. Provide their consent and approval.
5. Navigate through the form.
6. Sign and submit their section of the form.

Corrections: If You Filed a FAFSA Form Using an Incorrect Social Security Number (SSN)

If you filed a 2024 – 25 FAFSA form using an incorrect SSN, do the following:

1. Log in and update your information in your Account Settings.
2. Once the Social Security Administration (SSA) verifies your account status, update the information on your FAFSA form by selecting "Make a Correction."
3. Once the information on your FAFSA form has been updated, navigate through the rest of the form.
4. Sign and submit the form.

If you believe that the SSN you reported is correct, then follow the instructions for updating the SSA and the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC):

1. Contact the SSA by calling 1-800-772-1213 or by visiting ssa.gov to either confirm your SSN or request that they update their records.
2. Once SSA resolves the issue, contact the FSAIC at 1-800-433-3243.
3. Ask the FSAIC to manually sync their data with the SSA. You'll be notified by email once a match is confirmed.
4. Reach out to your college's or career school's financial aid office to inform them of the update.

Changes to Federal School Codes: If You Want to Add or Delete a School

If you want to make your FAFSA information available to an additional school after filing the FAFSA form, you may add that school's Federal School Code.

Once your 2024 – 25 FAFSA form is processed, you can add or delete a school on your FAFSA form by doing the following steps:

1. Log in and go to your account Dashboard.
2. Select the submitted FAFSA form.
3. Select the processed FAFSA submission in the “My Activity” section.
4. Select the “Add or Remove Schools” button.
5. Search for the school by entering either the school code or the state, city, and/or school name and then select “Search.”
6. Select the school from the search results. The school’s Federal School Code will appear in the form.
7. Submit the update.

Note: No more than 20 schools may be listed on your 2024 – 25 FAFSA form at one time. If there are 20 schools on your FAFSA form, any new school codes that are added will replace one or more of the school codes already listed. Any school removed from the list won’t have automatic access to new FAFSA information you provided after you removed that school. However, the school will still have the data you submitted when you listed that school on the FAFSA form.

Updates: If Your Situation Has Changed

Most information cannot be updated because it must be accurate as of the day you originally signed your FAFSA form. For example, if you spent some of your savings after filing the FAFSA form, you may not update your information to show a change in that amount. You should speak to the financial aid office at the college or career/trade school you plan to attend if there will be a significant change in your or your parent’s income for the present year or if your family has other circumstances that cannot be reported on the FAFSA form.

If your personal circumstances change and impact your dependency status after you submit your FAFSA form, contact your school’s financial aid office to ask if they have a policy that allows you to update your answers to the personal circumstance questions. The financial aid staff will tell you what to do.

How do I make changes to my FAFSA form?

You can make changes in one of the following ways:

- Make changes by logging in to your StudentAid.gov account. If you’re a dependent student and you change information about your parent(s), one of your parents must sign your FAFSA form electronically using their own StudentAid.gov account.
- If you received a paper FAFSA Submission Summary by mail, you can make your changes, sign it, and send it to the address listed on your FAFSA Submission Summary.
- Contact the college or career school you plan to attend and ask them to make the changes.

Note: Federal tax information transferred directly from the IRS cannot be changed on your online FAFSA form. If you filed an IRS Form 1040-X amended return, contact your college’s or career school’s financial aid office to discuss whether it would be appropriate for the school to adjust the information on your FAFSA form.

Change Answer to “Direct Unsubsidized Loan Only” Question

On the 2024 – 25 FAFSA form, dependent students have the option to indicate that their parents are unwilling to provide their information and therefore want to apply for only a Direct Unsubsidized Loan. However, if a dependent student doesn’t provide parent information, their eligibility for other types of federal student aid can’t be calculated. This means they won’t be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant, Federal Work-Study, or a Direct Subsidized Loan.

If you selected to apply for only a Direct Unsubsidized Loan by mistake, follow the steps below to change your answer to this question and invite your parent(s) to your form.

1. Log in to StudentAid.gov and select your FAFSA submission from the “My Activity” section of your account Dashboard. you’ll then see your submission details, including your form’s status. Select “Start Your Correction” from under the “Student Actions Needed” section.
2. Select “Continue” on the “Correct Your FAFSA Form” page.
3. Select “Start Student Section” on the “Error Summary” page.
4. Navigate through the Personal Circumstances section until you reach the “Your Dependency Status” page. You’ll see that “Yes” is selected as the answer to the “Direct Unsubsidized Loan Only” question.
5. Change your answer to the “Direct Unsubsidized Loan Only” question to “No.” Then, select “Continue” to navigate through the rest of the form and invite your parent(s).
6. When you reach the “Review Changes” page, confirm that your answer to the “Direct Unsubsidized Loan Only” question has been changed to “No.” Then, select “Continue” to sign and submit your section of the correction.
7. Review the next steps included on the “Section Complete” page. To complete your form, your parent(s) must log in, complete their section, provide their consent and approval and signature, and submit the correction.

2024 – 25: Add a Missing Signature

All required contributors (you, your parent[s], your spouse) must provide a signature on your 2024 – 25 FAFSA form. If your form is missing one or more required signatures, it isn’t complete, and you won’t be eligible for federal student aid.

Once your form is processed, you and your contributor(s) can follow the steps below to add a missing signature.

1. Log in to StudentAid.gov and select the FAFSA submission from the “My Activity” section of your account Dashboard. You’ll then see a submission details page. Under “FAFSA Form Processed,” select “Provide Signature.”
2. On the “Correct Your FAFSA Form” page, select “Provide Signature.”
3. On the “Review Changes” page, select “Continue.”
 - a. Note: If a missing signature is your only error, you’ll be taken directly to this page. If your section of the form has other errors, you’ll be taken to the first page that needs additional information and will reach the “Review Changes” page once you’ve fixed all issues.
4. On the “Signature” page, select “Sign and Submit.”
5. After selecting “Sign and Submit,” you’ll be taken to a page that confirms the FAFSA form is complete.

Learn About the FAFSA Submission Summary

How do I view my online FAFSA Submission Summary?

View your online FAFSA Submission Summary by

1. logging in to your StudentAid.gov account Dashboard,
2. selecting your processed FAFSA submission from the “My Activity” section, and
3. selecting “View FAFSA Submission Summary.”

After your 2024 – 25 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) form is submitted and processed, you can access your FAFSA Submission Summary – an electronic or paper document that summarizes the information you reported on your FAFSA form. It includes your estimated eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant and federal student loans, your Student Aid Index (SAI), and whether you’ve been selected for verification. The FAFSA Submission Summary replaces the *Student Aid Report* for the 2024 – 25 award year.

Getting your FAFSA Submission Summary

If you have a StudentAid.gov account and your FAFSA information has been processed, you can view your online FAFSA Submission Summary regardless of the method (online or on a FAFSA PDF) you used to file a FAFSA form. View your online FAFSA summary by following the instructions above.

The college(s) or career/trade school(s) you list on your FAFSA form will have access to your FAFSA data electronically within a day after it is processed.

Info in the FAFSA Submission Summary

At the top of your online FAFSA Submission Summary, under the “Eligibility Overview” tab, you’ll see the date your application was received, the date your application was processed, and a four-digit Data Release Number.

If your FAFSA form is complete and fully processed, your estimated federal student aid and SAI will display under the “Eligibility Overview” tab of your online FAFSA Submission Summary. If your FAFSA Submission Summary indicates action required, it won’t include your estimated federal student aid and SAI. Instead, your FAFSA Submission Summary will request information that you must provide before we can determine your eligibility for federal student aid.

Your FAFSA Submission Summary may also contain a note indicating that you’ve been selected for verification. If you’ve been selected for verification, there will be an asterisk by your SAI.

Under the “FAFSA Form Answers” tab, you’ll see the answers that you and, if applicable, your contributor(s) provided on your FAFSA form. Federal tax information from the IRS won’t display.

Under the “School Information” tab, you’ll see information about the schools that you selected to receive your FAFSA information. You can compare the graduation rate, retention rate, transfer rate, default rate, median debt upon completion, and average annual cost.

Under the “Next Steps” tab, you’ll see any comments that pertain to your FAFSA form. Some comments may require you to start a correction or send additional documentation to the college or career school you plan to attend. Other comments may be informational and do not require any further action.

Your FAFSA Submission Summary is **not** a financial aid offer. Unlike the FAFSA Submission Summary, which provides high-level estimates of your eligibility for federal student aid, a financial aid offer tells you exactly what financial aid you’re eligible to receive at a particular college or career school. Most schools will wait to send you a financial aid offer until after they accept you for admission.

Reviewing the FAFSA Submission Summary

Review your FAFSA Submission Summary carefully to make sure it’s correct. The college(s) or career school(s) you listed on your FAFSA form will use your information to determine your eligibility for federal – and possibly nonfederal – financial aid. A school may ask you to verify the accuracy of your FAFSA data, so you need to be sure the information is correct.

Use the checklist and comments under the “Next Steps” tab to make sure all your issues are resolved. If you need assistance, contact the financial aid office at the college or career school you plan to attend.

If you don’t have any changes to make to the information listed on your FAFSA Submission Summary, just keep it for your records.

How to Review and Evaluate Your Financial Aid Offers

After you submit your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) form, the schools you've been accepted to will use the information you provided to create your aid offer (aka what determines your out-of-pocket costs to attend a school). All financial aid offers (sometimes called award letters) are different, so how can you tell which school is the best fit? Follow these steps to create an action plan for comparing aid offers:

1. Add up your total expected and unexpected costs
2. Add up your federal student aid
3. Add up your state aid
4. Add up your institutional (school) aid
5. Consider additional steps to fill any gaps
6. Consider other factors that matter to you
7. Rank your options and find your best fit

Understand What an Aid Offer Is and Isn't

There's no standardized format or delivery method for financial aid offers. They can be sent by postal mail, but most often they're sent electronically. Some schools may provide a timeline within your acceptance letter for when you can expect to receive your aid offer.

What is a financial aid offer?

A financial aid offer is a document that comes from a school's financial aid office after you submit your FAFSA form. It will include the exact amounts and types of student aid that you are being offered by the college, career school, or trade school.

When can I expect a financial aid offer?

You will receive a financial aid offer from each college, career school, or trade school you have applied and been accepted to. Many schools will send them in March or April.

What do I do with my aid offer?

Carefully review the student aid that you are being offered. When you've decided which student aid to accept, make sure you follow the directions listed on your financial aid offer to inform your school's financial aid office.

Your aid offer is your best source of truth for your school costs because it includes the exact amounts and types of student aid you're being offered.

Your aid offer isn't going to give you the full picture of the total costs associated with attending each school, but that's where the following guidance comes in.

Add up your total expected and unexpected costs

To better compare your aid offers, you need to first understand the amount of debt you could be taking on at the schools you're considering, before you receive any aid. This includes the money you need for all things school related but also unexpected costs that a school may not include when calculating its cost of attendance.

For example, if one school has a longer commute, you'll want to account for additional weekly gas or public transportation expenses to get a clearer picture of the total costs associated with that school.

To determine your estimated total costs (and the potential debt) for each school, make sure you estimate the amount before student aid is applied and don't factor in any income sources, such as a part-time job.

Add up your federal student aid

Now that you understand your costs, you can start to factor in your incoming funds (aka student aid). Some types of aid have more favorable terms than others, so you'll want to understand specifics to plan and compare correctly. This includes whether the aid is money that doesn't need to be repaid, earned money, or borrowed money. In the case of student loans, this also includes interest rates and loan limits.

Types of Federal Student Aid

- **GRANTS**
Gift aid that doesn't have to be repaid.
- **FEDERAL WORK-STUDY**
Money that is earned and doesn't have to be repaid.
- **LOANS**
Borrowed money that must be repaid.

Note: The amounts listed are for one academic year of school. Talk to your school about how your aid will be disbursed.

Federal Student Aid
AN OFFICE OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Program Name	Maximum Scheduled Award Amounts <small>(subject to change)</small>
Federal Pell Grant (2024–25)	up to \$7,395
Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)	up to \$4,000
Teacher Educational Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant	up to \$3,772
Federal Work-Study	varies by SCHOOL
Direct Subsidized Loans	up to \$5,500 <small>Depending on grade level and dependency status</small>
Direct Unsubsidized Loans	up to \$20,500
Direct PLUS Loans	varies by STUDENT <small>Based on cost of attendance minus other financial aid received</small>

Filling out the FAFSA form is the first step in qualifying for federal student aid. Your financial need impacts your eligibility for Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants, Federal Work-Study, and Direct Subsidized Loans. Unlike a loan, a Federal Pell Grant doesn't need to be repaid, except under certain rare circumstances.

Another form of federal student aid is Federal Work-Study, which you must qualify for. Federal Work-Study income isn't guaranteed — you need to find and apply for a job and will work to receive these funds, and the work-study amount may vary each year.

If you see “L” or “LN” abbreviations in your financial aid offer, they often stand for “loans.” “Sub” and “Unsub” stand for “subsidized” and “unsubsidized” loans. The major difference between subsidized and unsubsidized student loans has to do with interest. Here’s a quick way to remember the difference: “Unsubsidized” starts with a “U” because “you” start accruing interest right away on an unsubsidized loan.

Finally, parents of dependent undergraduate students and graduate or professional students can apply for Direct PLUS Loans to help pay for education expenses not covered by other financial aid. With parent PLUS loans, the parent, not the student, is fully responsible for paying back the loan. PLUS loans have the highest interest rates for federal student loans.

Add up your state aid

State aid is financial aid awarded by your state’s higher education agency to assist with the costs of attending a school. Usually, this type of financial aid is awarded to students attending school within the state they have lived in for a set amount of time.

Some states offer more than \$10,000 to students in the form of need-based grants. State aid can really make a difference in your total costs! Check with your state’s higher education agency to learn about state grants you may be eligible for and to see if you need to complete an additional application.

Add up your institutional (school) aid

Institutional aid includes scholarships and grant awards offered by your school. Some schools will offer institutional aid based on merit (aka high academic achievement or good grades), specialized field or major, athletics, and more. Tip: Institutional aid may be named after a successful graduate. Some schools may also offer grants or scholarships based on financial need.

Depending on a school’s resources, it may be able to offer institutional aid that drastically lowers your out-of-pocket costs. This is why you should always compare net price, not sticker price.

Net price is the amount you’ll need to pay out of pocket. You can calculate your net price for a school by using this formula:

Total Cost (the school’s cost of attendance and any anticipated additional costs) – Grants and Scholarships (aid you’re offered that doesn’t need to be repaid) = Your Net Price

Consider additional steps to fill any gaps

If you plan on working a part-time job or taking out private student loans, be sure to factor that into your aid offer comparison. Many students don’t receive enough aid to cover all their school expenses, and they use other sources to fill the gap. Explore options like scholarships and grants if you don’t receive enough student aid.

Consider other factors that matter to you

Other factors you value may impact your school preferences. For example, maybe you excel in small classes or have always dreamed of going to school in a big city.

With College Scorecard, you can learn more about the student body and facilities, and about the average earnings for someone who graduates from a specific program. You can even compare the average annual cost with what you see in your aid offer.

College Scorecard also provides helpful information about the surrounding environment of the school, campus diversity, specialized mission (like a Historically Black College and University), religious affiliation, and more.

While College Scorecard provides valuable data and insights, be sure to weigh a variety of factors when determining what school is a good fit for you.

Rank your options and find your best fit

You now have the knowledge and criteria to make a good comparison, so it's time to rank your choices. To find your out-of-pocket costs, you'll need to organize the numbers you found in steps 1–6. You'll want to consider student aid based on the order you should accept it: grants and scholarships first, then work-study funds, and then student loans.

Once you have weighed your options, make sure you pay attention to your school's deadline and follow the directions listed to accept your aid offer on time for your final choice.

7 Options if You Didn't Receive Enough Financial Aid

If you did not receive enough financial aid to cover your school expenses, you have seven ways to fill the gap.

Your school's financial aid office is an excellent resource to help you explore these additional options, even after completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Apply for scholarships

Scholarships are usually merit-based and do not have to be repaid. The key is being prepared, because scholarships have deadlines and may require time to write essays. So get organized and regularly search and apply for scholarships.

Ask your school's financial aid office or your academic advisor about school-specific or departmental (major-specific) scholarships. You should also look for local scholarships from where you live or graduated from high school. Scholarships may be offered by

- community organizations
- religious organizations
- fraternal organizations
- businesses in your community or that employ your parent(s)

Look for scholarship resources that are available from your state government or from statewide organizations with which you may have been involved. Research companies in your state that are related to your planned field of study.

National scholarships can be more competitive, but don't let that keep you from applying. Prioritize local applications first.

Just be careful. With scholarship opportunities, it's wise to be cautious of student aid scams. If you are ever concerned about the legitimacy of a scholarship opportunity, contact your school's financial aid office.

Prioritize local applications first and make sure you meet all deadlines.

Find part-time work

Federal Work-Study can help you cover some costs throughout the semester since work-study funds are paid as you earn them. Remember, these funds are typically paid directly to you through a paycheck. So if you still owe an amount to your school, you need to take those funds back to the school to pay your bill.

If you were not awarded work-study funds, most schools have other part-time, on-campus positions that can help pay for school. Working part-time on campus can be beneficial to your educational experience, as long as you can find a healthy balance between your school and work. Ask your financial aid office or career services office how to apply for on-campus positions.

Tuition payment plans

Your school's billing office (sometimes referred to as the bursar's office, cashier's office, or student accounts office) may have payment plans available to help you spread the remaining costs over several payments throughout a semester. The payment plan can help you budget the payments rather than paying in one lump sum, possibly helping you avoid costly late fees.

Request a reevaluation of your circumstances

Sometimes a family's finances are not accurately reflected on the FAFSA form because of changes that have occurred, such as job loss/reduction, divorce or separation, or other special circumstances. This may be a consideration now that you can file the FAFSA form early with tax information that is two years old by the time enrollment begins.

Schools are not required to consider special circumstances, but those that do have a process, called professional judgement. Through this process, you can petition for a reevaluation of the information on your FAFSA form. This process will likely require you to submit additional documentation to your school's financial aid office. If warranted, the financial aid office can then recalculate your eligibility, possibly resulting in a change to your financial aid offer.

Request additional federal student loans

If you've exhausted other options and still need additional funds to help you pay for school, contact your school's financial aid office to find out if you're eligible for additional federal student loans. Just remember to borrow only what you need to pay your educational expenses.

If you are a dependent student and still need more money, your parent can apply for a Federal Direct PLUS Loan. Most schools use our online application, but others may have their own application. The PLUS loan application process does include a credit check. If your parent is not approved, he or she may still be able to receive a Direct PLUS Loan by obtaining an endorser (cosigner) or documenting extenuating circumstances. If a parent borrower is unable to secure a PLUS loan, the student may be eligible for additional unsubsidized student loans of up to \$5,000, depending upon his or her year in school.

School-based loans, advances, or emergency aid

Sometimes you may have college-related costs, such as housing costs or other living expenses, before your financial aid is disbursed. Your school may offer an option to advance your financial aid, offer a school-based loan program, or have an emergency aid procedure.

Several schools now offer emergency aid opportunities if you experience unexpected expenses or challenges that are making it difficult for you to complete the semester. Ask your financial aid office if they offer these options and always make sure you are aware of the terms and conditions (such as interest rates or repayment terms) of your agreement.

Private or alternative loans

Some private financial institutions offer education loans that do not require the FAFSA form. While we recommend federal aid first, we realize it does not always cover the cost, especially for more expensive schools. Private loans will almost always require a cosigner and may have higher fees or interest rates depending on your credit. Ask your financial aid office if they have a list of lenders for you to consider. If your school does not maintain such a list, you can search for lenders on your own.

Compare products before making your choice: look at interest rates, fees, repayment terms, creditworthiness requirements, satisfactory academic progress requirements, etc. Students and parents are free to choose whichever lender best fits their needs – even if it is not on a school’s preferred lender list.

Before going out on your own and making any final decisions on how to fill the gap between your aid and your expenses, we recommend that you meet with a representative in your financial aid office to determine what campus resources might be available. You might still have time to change some of your choices before the semester begins: Can you change the type of meal plan you chose? The type of housing? The number of classes in which you are enrolled? Check with campus officials to see if you still have time to select a different, more affordable option.