



If you're a parent of a college bound child, the financial aid process can seem a bit overwhelming. Who's considered the parent? Who do you include in household size? How do assets and tax filing fit into the process? Does this have to be done every year? Here are some common questions that parents have when helping their children prepare for and pay for college or career school:

Why does my child need to provide my information on the FAFSA?

While we provide over \$150 billion in financial aid each year, the *federal student aid programs* are based on the assumption that it is primarily your and your child's responsibility to pay for college. If your child was born after January 1, 1991 then most likely he or she is considered a dependent student and you'll need to include your information on the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSASM).

Who's considered a parent when completing the FAFSA?

If you need to report parent information, here are some guidelines to help you:

- If your legal parents (your biological and/or adoptive parents) are married to each other, answer the questions about both of them, regardless of whether your parents are of the same or opposite sex.
- If your legal parents are not married to each other and live together, answer the questions about both of them, regardless of whether your parents are of the same or opposite sex.
- If your parent is widowed or was never married, answer the questions about that parent.
- If your parents are divorced or separated, follow [these guidelines](#).

More information on who's considered the parent can be found here: <http://1.usa.gov/1fdcCy2>

Who's considered part of the household?

When completing your child's FAFSA, you should include parents, any dependent student(s) and any other child who lives at home **and** receives more than half of their [support](#) from you in the household size. Also include any people who are not your children but who live with you and for whom you provide more than half of their support.

Do I need to wait until I file my income taxes?

In some states there are [deadlines](#) for additional monies so you'll want to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1st. You do not need to wait until you file your federal tax return. If you haven't done your taxes by the time you complete the FAFSA, you can estimate amounts based on the previous year if nothing has drastically changed. After you file your taxes, you'll need to log back in to the FAFSA and [correct any estimated information](#). If you've already filed your taxes, you can use the [IRS Data Retrieval Tool](#) to automatically pull in your tax information directly from the IRS into the FAFSA.

Do I need to do this every year?

Yes, you and your child need to complete the FAFSA each year in order for your child to be considered for federal student aid. The good news is that each subsequent year you can use the Renewal Application option so you only have to update information that has changed from the previous year!

What else do I need to know before I begin?

You'll need to get a PIN and have all the necessary documents before you begin. Here's a handy checklist:

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/filling-out>