# How to Apply for Financial Aid

The financial aid process is filled with unfamiliar terms and complicated details. This guide is meant to break down the complex process for you so that you can get to college. In the following pages you will find important information such as deadlines, expectations, and steps involved. Before beginning the process, here are a few key terms that you should know to make everything a bit easier. If you are unsure or confused about any other terms throughout the process, they are defined in the link below. The glossary is in both English and Spanish here.

Key Terms:
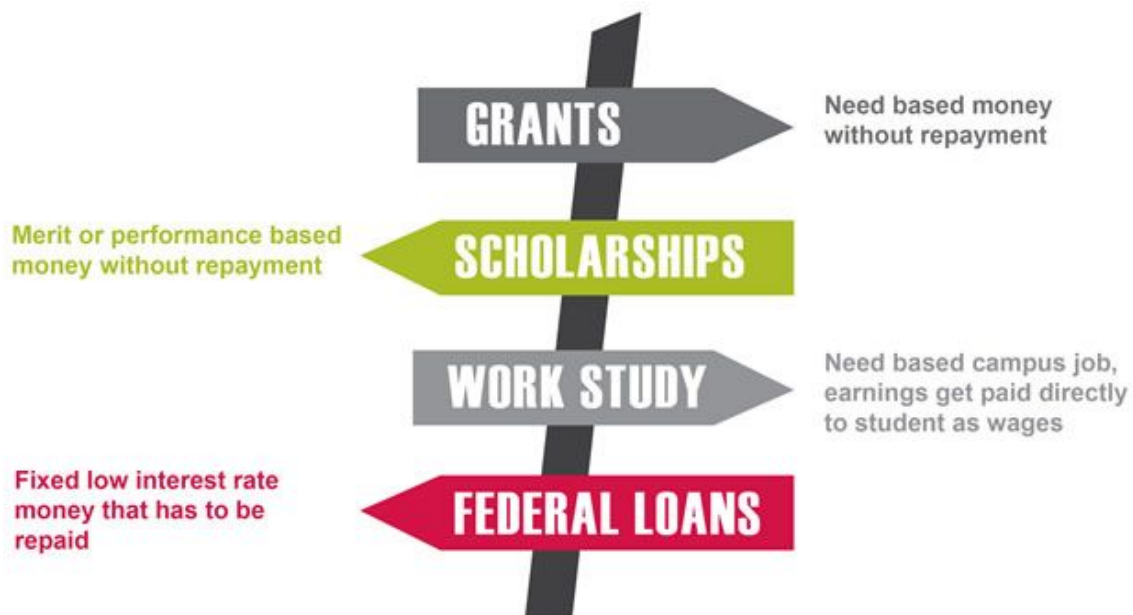
Award Amount
The amount of money that the school will cover of the total cost of college.

Federal Student Loan
Money borrowed from the government to help you pay for college. You have to pay it back, with interest, when you graduate.

Federal Work Study
A way for students to more easily get on-campus jobs to help them pay for their education.

Grant
Money given to you by the government or the university to cover part of your education, that **does not need to repaid.**

Scholarship
Same as grant, money given to you to cover part of the cost of education that **usually does not need to be repaid.**

Subsidized Loan
Money borrowed from the government to cover part of the cost of education that **needs to be repaid, but without interest.**

Unsubsidized Loan
Money borrowed from the government to cover part of the cost of education that **needs to be repaid with interest.**

Some things to keep in mind…
This guide outlines the process to complete the Federal Application For Student Aid (FAFSA). In general, financial aid comes from both the government and the school that the student attends. Undocumented students are not able to receive government money, but <u>can receive money from some schools.</u> See page ( ) for more information for undocumented students. Also remember that the government and the institution are not your only two sources of financial help. Use the internet as a resource. There are MANY other scholarships available for students. See page ( ) for other available scholarships.

FAFSA

What should I do first?

The first step in the financial aid process is to think about which schools you want to apply to. The government allows you to send the FAFSA to up to ten institutions. You will list these on your application. Therefore, it is important to think critically about how to choose a good institution for you. Please see page 6 to learn about this process. You do not have to decide on these ten schools before beginning the application, but make sure you have thought about it as you start applying for financial aid.

Before filling out your financial aid documents, try to gather as many of the following documents as possible:
- Social security number
- Parents' social security number
- Driver's' license number (if you have one)
- Alien Registration Number (if you are not a U.S. citizen)
- Federal tax information or tax returns
  - IRS W-2 information for you and your parents
  - IRS 1040
  - IRS 1040A
  - IRS 1040Ez
- Foreign Tax Return
- Records of untaxed income such as..
  - Child support
  - Veterans noneducation benefits
  - Interest income
- Information on…

- Cash savings
- Checking Accounts balances
- Family Assets

**If you cannot find all of this information, DO NOT worry! You can still begin the process and find any missing information after finishing other parts of the application. DO NOT wait to start the process because you do not have all of the documents!

After collecting as many of these documents as you can, you have to register for an **FSA ID.** This is the username and password combination which will let you access the FAFSA.

How do you get your FSA ID?
1. Go to this website
2. Click on "Create your FSA ID now" and fill in the information.
3. Watch this video for more details about how to create the FSA ID
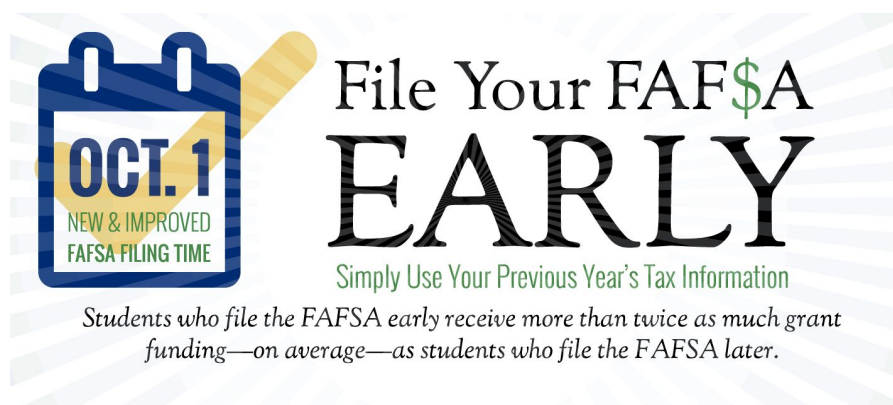
Now that you have your FSA ID, you can begin filling out your FAFSA!

1. Go to this website
2. Click on "Start a New FAFSA"
    a. Enter your (the student's) FSA ID. You can also log in by entering the student's name, social security number, and date of birth. The good thing about logging in with the FSA ID is that some of the sections on the FAFSA will automatically be filled out.
3. Fill in any information that you can. If you have questions about certain terms or questions, look at this document which explains what each question means
4. At the bottom of the form, do not forget to SIGN YOUR NAME.

Here is a video which details the process!

You **DO NOT** have to complete the entire FAFSA all at once. The FAFSA will save your progress. When you go back to it, you can login and keep working.

Dekadlines:

File Your FAF$A EARLY
Simply Use Your Previous Year's Tax Information
OCT. 1 NEW & IMPROVED FAFSA FILING TIME

Students who file the FAFSA early receive more than twice as much grant funding—on average—as students who file the FAFSA later.

The FAFSA is available on October 1st of the year before you plan to go to college. For example, if you plan to go to college between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018, the FAFSA is available on October 1st, 2016. The chart below is taken from here, the same form which explains what each question on FAFSA means.

If you plan to attend college from	You will submit this FAFSA	You can submit the FAFSA from	Using income and tax info from
July 1, 2017–June 30, 2018	2017–18	Oct. 1, 2016–June 30, 2018	2015
July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019	**2018–19**	**Oct. 1, 2017–June 30, 2019**	**2016**
July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020	2019–20	Oct. 1, 2018–June 30, 2020	2017

The CSS Profile is available on October 1. See below for more information about the CSS Profile.

Some things to think about…

The deadlines above tell you the last day to submit FAFSA and get government aid. BUT, many institutions and states have **earlier deadlines**. You should check each school's website that you're applying to, to find out when the financial aid documents are due for each institution. Generally, they are due between January and February, so you should complete the FAFSA **as early as possible** to make sure you can get as much money as possible to help pay for college.

To check when the FAFSA is due in your state, go to this [website](#), and enter your state, and year that you'll be going to college. Enter the state where you live right now, not the state where the university is located.

CSS Profile

Many schools also make you fill out the CSS Profile to get financial aid from the college. To figure out if one of the schools you're applying to requires the completion of the CSS profile, check this [list](#).

How do you complete the CSS Profile?

First, you must have an account with Collegeboard.org You may already have an account with CollegeBoard at this point because you need one to take the SATs. This [link](#) "tours" the CSS Profile, if you would like an overview of the process before beginning. This [tutorial](#) provides step by step instructions.

1. If you do not have an account with CollegeBoard, go to [this](#) website and fill in the fields.
2. Go to the [CSS profile](#) website and sign in with your username and password
3. Fill in the information
   a. You must have your tax documents to fill out the CSS Profile, just like you did when you filled out the FAFSA. It's a good idea to gather the same forms before sitting down to complete this process.
   b. Also like FAFSA, you **do not** need to complete the CSS Profile all at once. It will save your progress.

Fee Waivers

Unlike the FAFSA, the CSS Profile costs money ($25 to send to the first school, and $16 for every other school). **However, you can ask for fee waivers**. You will get a fee waiver if you 1) ask for one **and 2) fit any of these requirements…**
1) You used a fee waiver on the SAT
2) Your family makes $45,000 or less
3) You're an orphan or ward of the court under 24 years old.

For more information about **fee waivers** visit this page

You can send the CSS profile to as many schools as you want. If you think of a school that you want to send it to and did not include it in the first round, don't worry! You can add schools at any time.

What Comes Next?

When you have finished filling out the FAFSA, the federal government will look at your application and decide how much money they will award you. They will send you a Student Aid Report which is basically a printed version of your FAFSA. Read it to make sure all of the information you put down in accurate. Then make any necessary corrections as soon as possible.

Other Resources that Might Help You

This "college cost calculator" will help you figure out about how much college will cost. Feel free to use it to get an idea of how much the school will cost, but keep in mind that **few** families actually pay this amount. After financial aid is included, this number should become much lower.

Looking at this website, which has a variety of tips about paying for college.

This website allows you to compare the costs of different colleges after including how much aid you got from each. Unfortunately, even aid award information is not always completely clear. By breaking down the award into its different parts (loans, grants, scholarships, etc), you can learn exactly how much each school would cost.

Undocumented Students

As mentioned above, undocumented students can get institutional aid, even though they cannot get federal government aid. They can receive state aid also, depending on the state.
Some tips:
1. Complete the FAFSA if you have a Social Security Number
   a. You CAN complete the FAFSA if your parents don't have a social security number
2. Complete the CSS Profile if you don't have a Social Security Number (you can complete this if you have a SSN also)
3. Upload tax documents and W-2 forms to the IDOC system. (Institutional Documentation Service; it is a part of the College Board website).