

# FAFSA Checklist

Don't leave money on the table! More than \$24 billion of financial aid goes unclaimed each year.\* Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and find out what federal and state financial aid you may be eligible for to help pay for your college education.

\*National College Access Network

## Step 1 Create your FSA ID

- Go to **fafsa.gov** to create your FSA ID. Click on the lock icon at the top of the page to begin.
- Create a username and password then enter your email address. Enter your name, date of birth, Social Security number, contact information, and challenge questions and answers.
- Review your information and read and accept the terms and conditions.
- Confirm your email address using the secure code, which will be sent to the email address you entered when you created your FSA ID.
- Once you verify your email address, you can use it instead of your username to log in to complete your FAFSA. You can also use your FSA ID to sign your FAFSA right away.

## Step 2 Need Help? Find a FAFSA Completion Event

Check with your school counselor about financial aid nights or FAFSA completion events at your school or in your community. Each year, GSFC partners with schools, colleges and community organizations to host these FREE events across the state to help students and their families complete the FAFSA. Before heading to an event, you'll need to bring:

- Your Social Security Number.
- Your Alien Registration Number (if you are not a U.S. citizen).
- Your (parent's) most recent federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned.
- Bank statements and records of investments (if applicable).
- Records of untaxed income (if applicable).
- Your FSA ID to sign electronically.



Visit **GAfutures** for more information.  
Do not pay anyone to complete the FAFSA for you!  
Free means FREE!

## Step 3

# Filling out the FAFSA

Below are the basic steps for completing the FAFSA. Remember, the application is available October 1 for the following academic year. The earlier you submit it, the more opportunity you have to receive financial aid to help pay for your education after high school.

### 1. Go to [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov) and login using your FSA ID.

Applying online is quicker, easier and ensures your information will be saved for next year. Don't forget, you will need to fill out a FAFSA every school year to be eligible for federal funds.

### 2. Enter your personal information.

Make sure everything you enter is exactly how it appears on official government documents.

### 3. Enter your financial information.

The IRS Data Retrieval Tool can transfer your tax data to your application automatically. You should use income records for the tax year prior to the academic year you're applying for.

### 4. Choose up to 10 schools.

Be sure to include schools you are seriously considering, whether you've applied or have been accepted yet. You will get an estimate of your financial aid eligibility.

### 5. Think you're finished? Double check.

You can check the status immediately after submitting your FAFSA online. You'll receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) within three weeks from **FederalStudentAidFAFSA@cpsemail.ed.gov** or in the mail if you did not provide an email address. Check it to make sure there are no mistakes. If there are, follow the directions provided to correct and resubmit as soon as possible.

**GSFC** | Georgia Student  
Finance Commission

800.505.4732



**GAfutures.org**  
Explore. Plan. Succeed.



# After the FAFSA

## 1. Review your **Student Aid Report (SAR)**.

- After you submit your FAFSA, you will receive a SAR within three days if you submitted your FAFSA online or three weeks if you mailed a signature page. Your SAR is a summary of the information you provided on your FAFSA.
- Your SAR also indicates if you have been selected for verification. If you have, the first thing to do is relax. Then, learn more about the next steps on the back of this checklist.

## 2. Locate your **Estimated Family Contribution (EFC)**.

- Your EFC can be found in the box at the top of the first page of your SAR.
- Your EFC is a measure of your family's financial strength and is calculated according to a formula established by law. This formula considers the following about you (and your parents, if you're a dependent): taxed and untaxed income, assets, benefits (such as unemployment and Social Security), family size and number of family members.
- The EFC determines your eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant as well as other federal and non-federal student aid. Schools use the EFC to determine your federal financial aid eligibility and create your financial aid award letter.

## 3. Make corrections **If Needed**.

- Once you review your SAR, you may find there is missing data or an error. It is important to contact your college's financial aid office with any questions before making corrections. Corrections can be made by logging on to FAFSA.gov. Note: Any changes to the FAFSA must be signed with the appropriate FSA ID(s) and submitted.
- Your SAR information will be sent to each school listed on your FAFSA. Based on that information, the school may be required to request additional information to correct your FAFSA.

## 4. Next **Steps**.

- The school(s) you applied to, have been accepted to and listed on the FAFSA, will calculate your aid and send you an electronic or paper award letter with how much aid you're eligible for at that school. The timing of when you receive your award letter varies from school to school and depends on when you apply, if any verification requirements have been completed, and how the school chooses to schedule awarding of aid.
- Contact the financial aid office at the school(s) you applied to for more information or if you have any questions about your financial aid.

## 5. Check your **Emails Often**.

- Financial aid offices will primarily communicate through your college email. Make sure to check yours often. Requests for additional, often time-sensitive information, as well as your award letter will be sent via email.



# Selected for Verification, What's Next?

Being chosen for verification doesn't mean you're in trouble or did something wrong. Verification is simply to confirm the numbers entered on the FAFSA match up with the original documentation. Here are some helpful hints to navigate through the verification process.

## 1. Contact your **Financial Aid Office(s)**.

- If you submitted your FAFSA information to multiple schools, contact each one to determine the documents you will need to provide for verification. Remember, verification is time sensitive and you do not want to miss any deadlines.

## 2. Gather and/or complete **Requested Documents**.

- **Tax information** - If you and your parents (if you're a dependent) used the IRS Data Retrieval tool, the Financial Aid Office will most likely not need your tax information. However, if the IRS Data Retrieval tool was not used, a copy of your prior year tax return or tax transcript will be needed. If you or your parents need to obtain copies of tax returns, they can be accessed online at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov). For security purposes, you will need your Social Security number, date of birth, filing status and mailing address to access and request your records.
- **W-2s and/or other financial documents** - If you or your parents did not file a return, W-2s or other financial documents (e.g., proof of child support) may be requested.
- **Verification worksheets** - The Financial Aid Office will provide verification worksheets to accompany any requested documents. In some instances, completing and submitting this information will satisfy verification.

## 3. Make sure to send in your verification documents **Before Your School's Deadline.**

- Changes to your EFC are rare after you submit your documents for verification, and only occur if your verification materials show a discrepancy from your original FAFSA.
- Need-based institutional aid, such as campus-based and/or state scholarships and grants are time sensitive and are often first-come, first-served. So, submit your verification documents as soon as possible.

## 4. Follow up on changes to your **Financial Aid Package/Award Letter.**

- Keep in mind there is a chance your EFC could change if verification and the original FAFSA information are vastly different. This difference could either increase or decrease your EFC and change your financial aid package/award letter.
- If there are changes to your financial aid package/award letter, contact your Financial Aid Office to determine how you should move forward.

800.505.4732

