FAFSA

A Parent’s Guide to Financial Aid

2026–27 FAFSA • Step-by-step parent information session

What to prepare • How to complete your section • What happens next

Today’s Goal

1

Understand what FAFSA is and why every college-bound family should consider completing it.

2

Know what the student does first and when the parent becomes a contributor.

3

Know what information to gather before you begin.

4

Leave with a simple checklist for completing and reviewing the FAFSA.

FAFSA Basics



FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid.



The FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for federal student aid, including grants, work-study, and federal student loans.



States and colleges may also use FAFSA information for their own aid programs.



A FAFSA is generally completed each year the student attends college.

Start With StudentAid.gov

The student should start their own FAFSA whenever possible.

The student needs their own StudentAid.gov account.

Each required contributor—including a parent—needs a separate StudentAid.gov account.

Never share your StudentAid.gov username or password.

What Parents Should Gather

Student and parent personal information.

Federal tax information, W-2s, and records of money earned from work.

Records of child support received, if applicable.

Current records of cash, savings, checking, investments, businesses, or farms when requested.

A list of colleges or career schools the student is considering.

Who Is the Parent Contributor?

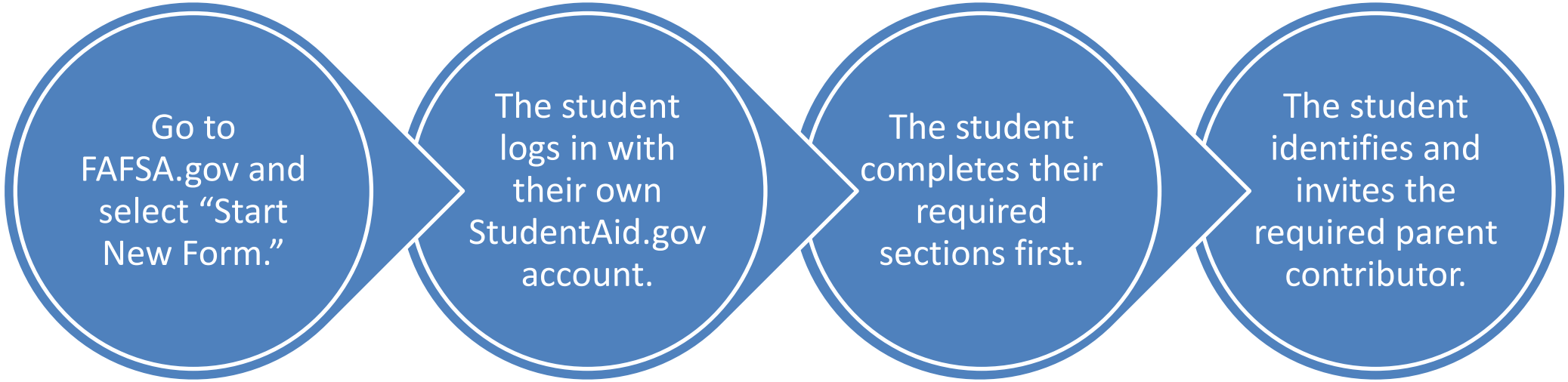
For a dependent student, at least one parent will usually be identified as a contributor.

A contributor provides required information, consent, and a signature.

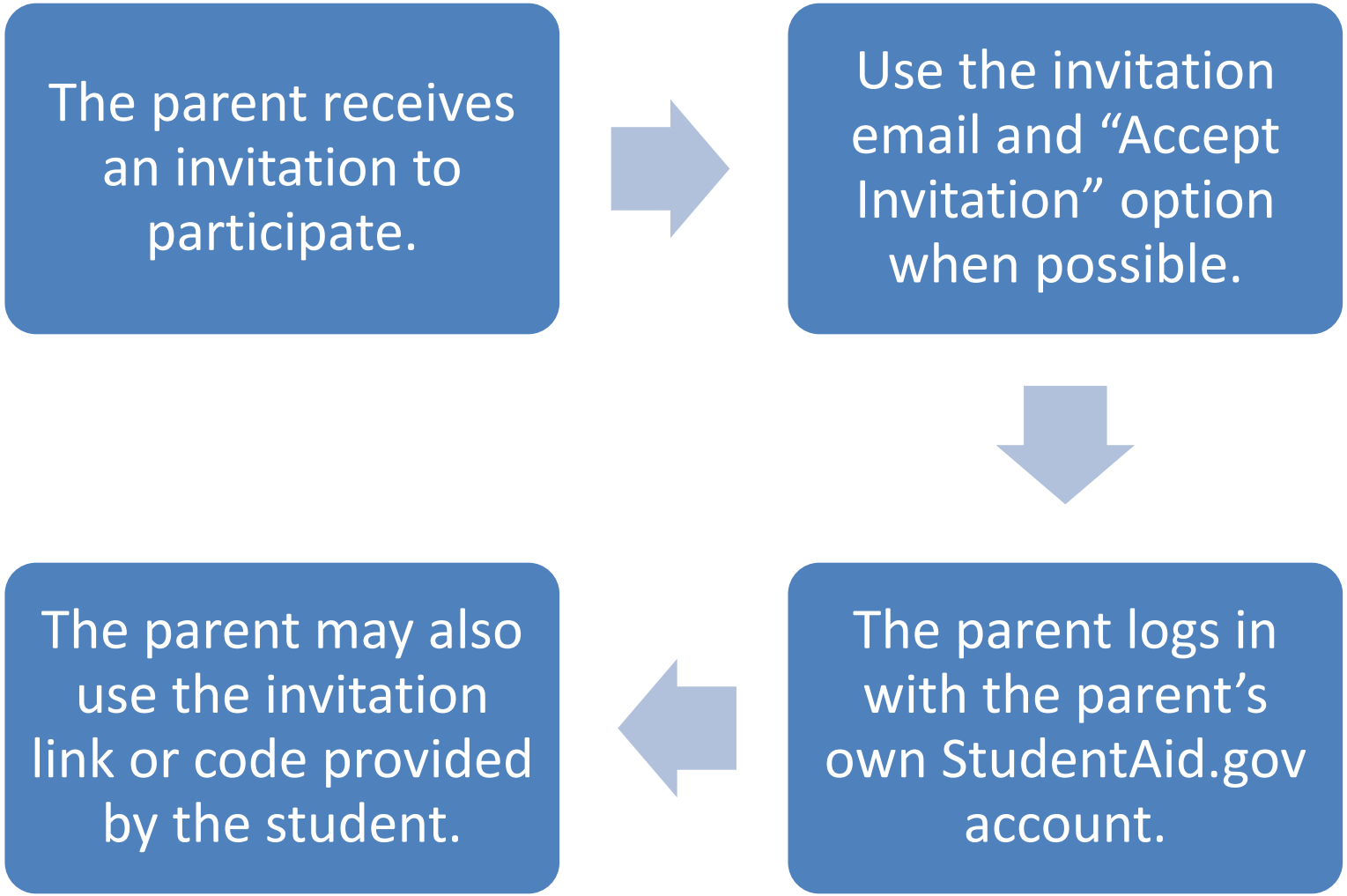
Being a FAFSA contributor does NOT mean the parent is legally responsible for paying the student's college costs.

If parents are separated or divorced, use the official FAFSA guidance to determine which parent should be invited.

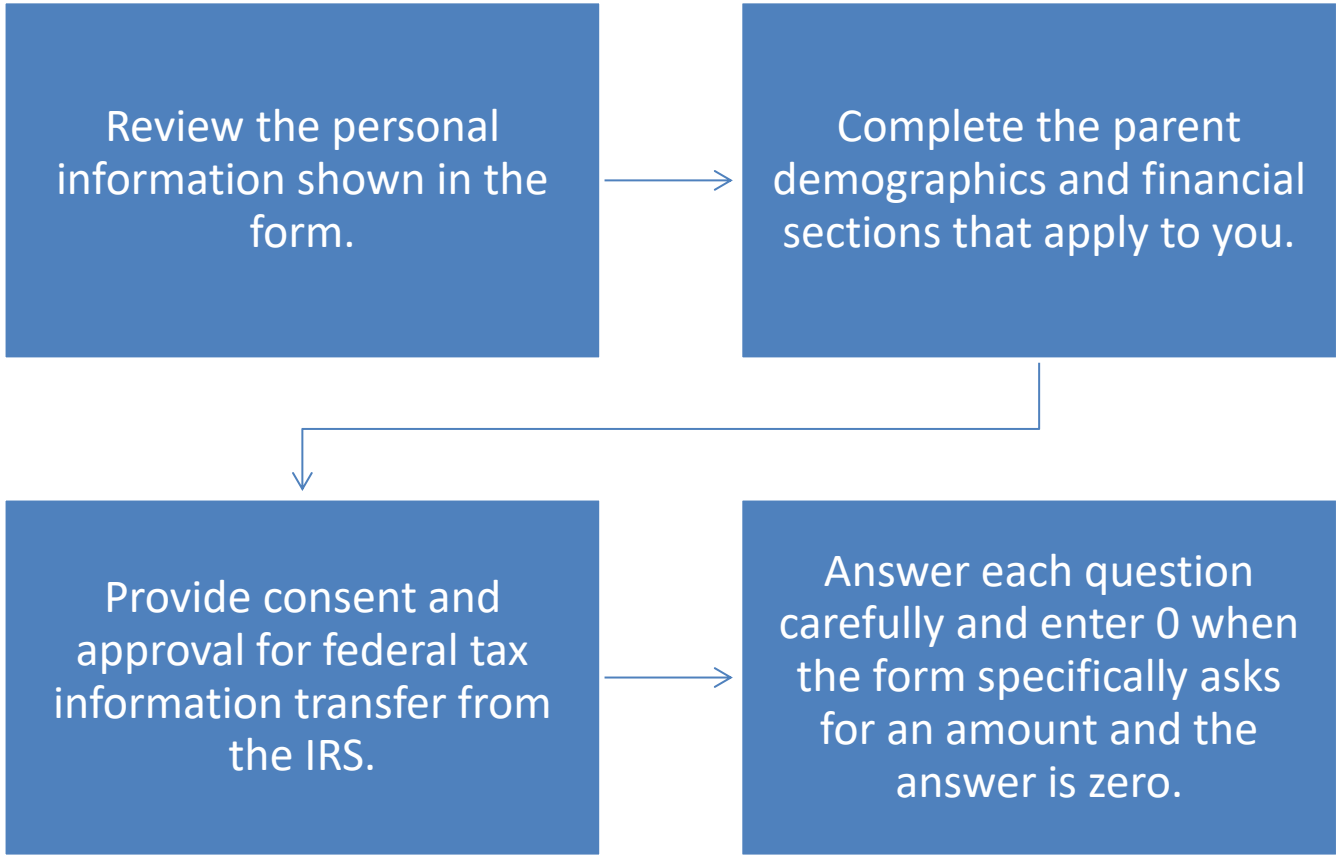
Step 1 • Student Starts the FAFSA



Step 2 • Parent Accepts the Invitation



Step 3 • Parent Completes Their Section



Step 4 • Review & Sign

Review the information before signing.

Correct any errors before submitting.

Complete the required consent and signature steps.

If another contributor is required, that person must also complete and sign their section before the FAFSA can be fully processed.

After You Submit

Watch for confirmation that the FAFSA was received and processed.

The student should monitor their StudentAid.gov account and email.

Review the FAFSA Submission Summary carefully.

If something is wrong, use the correction process described in StudentAid.gov.

Colleges may request additional information or verification.

FAFSA Submission Summary



The Submission Summary is provided after the FAFSA is processed.



It includes the Student Aid Index (SAI) and other FAFSA information.



Review the FAFSA Form Answers for accuracy.



The financial aid offer comes from the college—not from the FAFSA Submission Summary.

After You File: Understanding the Aid Offer

SAI

Student Aid Index

The number your FAFSA produces. Colleges use it — along with their own cost — to decide how much aid to offer.

1. **Grants**
   Money you don't repay, such as the Federal Pell Grant
2. **Work-Study**
   Part-time campus jobs that help cover costs
3. **Loans**
   Subsidized and unsubsidized federal student loans
4. **State & School Aid**
   Many state and institutional awards also use your FAFSA

Tip: compare offers across every school before deciding — the same SAI can lead to very different packages.

SAI Continued…

Ranges from –

-1,500 to 999,999

- A lower number is better - shows a higher financial need.
- Negative number like -1,500 indicates a maximum financial need and will qualify you for the highest Federal Pell Grant.
- Higher SAI number means that the federal formula estimates your family has more financial resources which=h will decrease your need-based eligibility.

Factors that go into SAI determination:

- Tax and untaxed income, assets, and benefits.
- Family size and number of family members in college.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Using	Using the wrong StudentAid.gov account.
Sharing	Sharing an account with a student or spouse.
Entering	Entering personal information differently from the student's official records.
Waiting	Waiting until a school or state deadline is almost here.
Skipping	Skipping FAFSA because you assume you will not qualify.
Forgetting	Forgetting to complete the FAFSA again for a future academic year.

Special Financial Circumstances



FAFSA information may not reflect a family's current financial circumstances.



If there has been a significant change in income or another major financial issue, contact the financial aid office at each college.



The college may ask for documentation and determine whether additional consideration is appropriate.

FAFSA Is Free



There is no fee to submit the FAFSA.



Use the official FAFSA and Federal Student Aid websites.

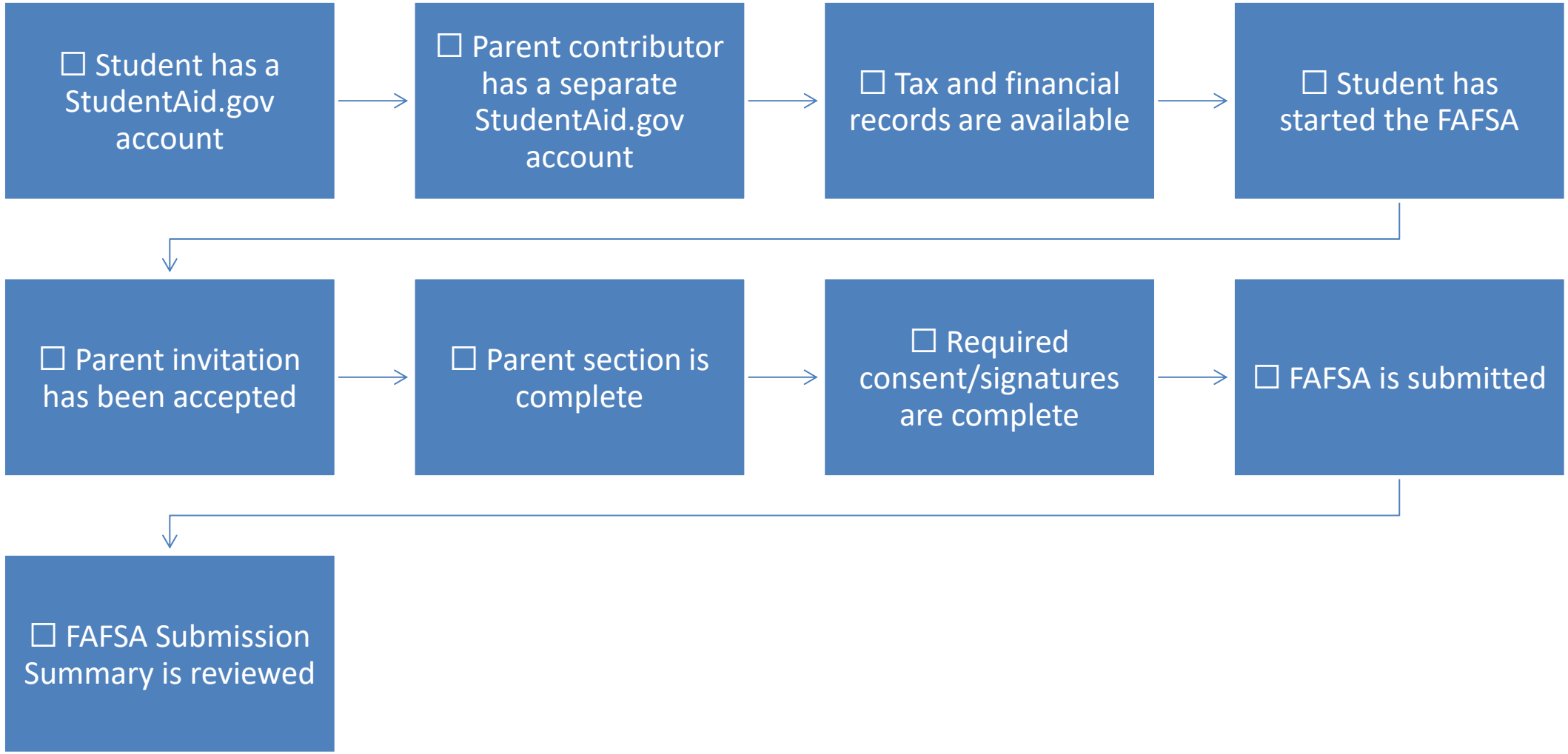


Be cautious of services that charge a fee simply to complete or submit FAFSA.



For help with your form, use official Federal Student Aid support.

Parent FAFSA Checklist



Questions & Next Steps



Start by creating or confirming your StudentAid.gov account.



Have your documents ready before you begin.



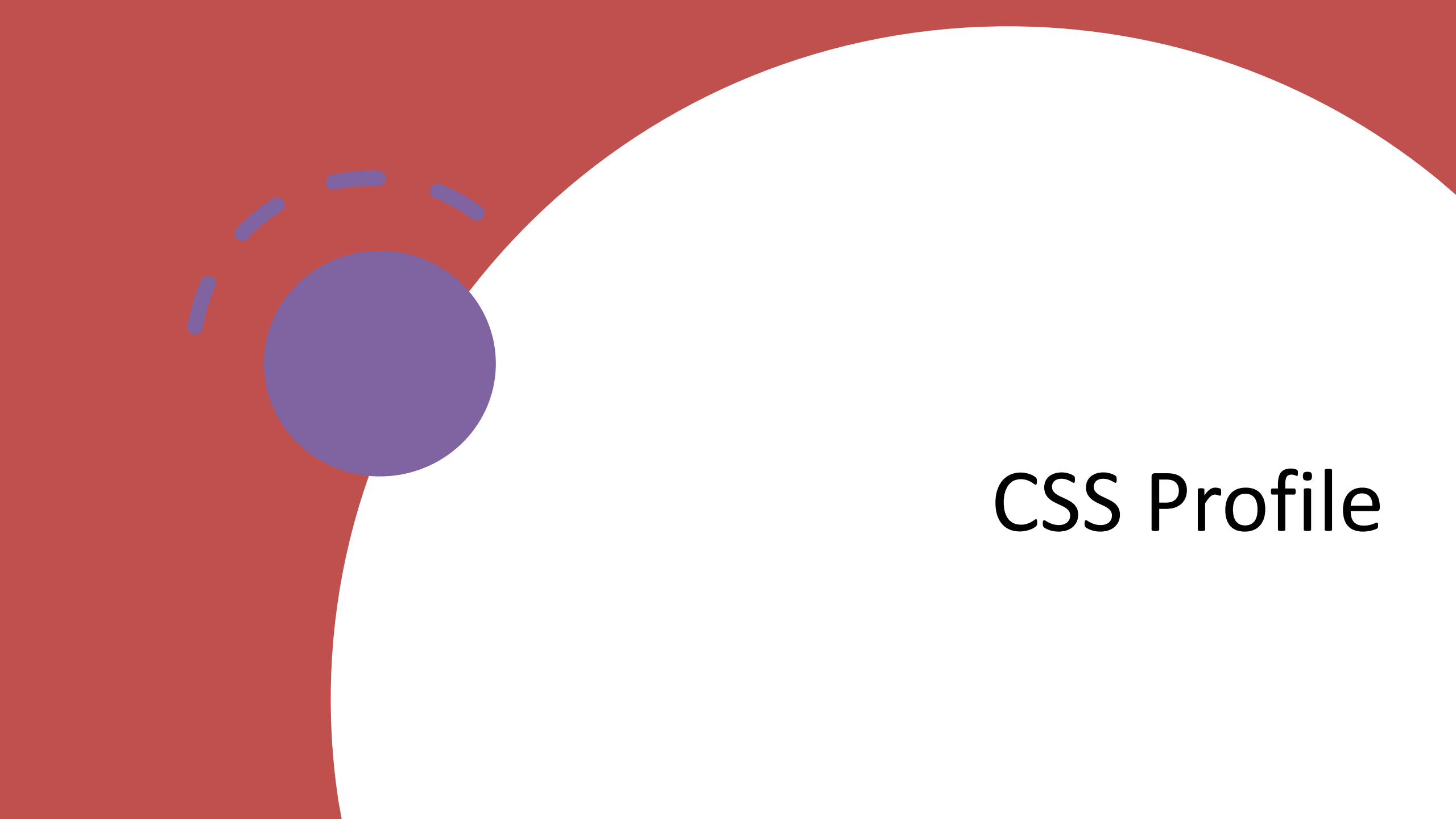
Let the student start the FAFSA and invite the required contributor.



Complete your parent section promptly.



Review the FAFSA Submission Summary and respond to college requests.


CSS Profile

Understanding the CSS Profile

An Overview of Financial Aid Applications

What it stands for: College Scholarship Service Profile.

The Purpose: An online application used by colleges and universities to award non-federal financial aid (such as institutional grants and scholarships).

Who manages it: Administered by the College Board, the same organization that runs the SAT.

Key Distinction: Unlike the FAFSA (which focuses on federal aid), the CSS Profile dives deeper into a family's financial situation to give colleges a more detailed picture of financial need.

CSS Profile vs. FAFSA

Key Differences You Need to Know:

The FAFSA: Required for all federal grants, work-study programs, and federal student loans. It is free for everyone to fill out.

The CSS Profile: Used primarily by private colleges and highly selective public universities to distribute their own school funds.

Financial Depth: The CSS Profile asks more detailed questions than the FAFSA, including inquiries about home equity, medical expenses, and non-custodial parent finances.

Cost to Apply: There is a fee to submit the application to schools, though fee waivers are automatically granted to domestic undergraduate students with a family income under $100,000.

Helpful Website Examples:

CSS Profile login page

Colleges that require a CSS Profile

Practice FAFSA Student/Parent View

Official Resources

FAFSA: https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

FAFSA parent guidance: https://studentaid.gov/articles/fafsa-for-parents/

FAFSA student steps: https://studentaid.gov/articles/fafsa-student-steps/

FAFSA Submission Summary: https://studentaid.gov/articles/fafsa-submission-summary/

FAFSA Help: https://studentaid.gov/fafsahelp

Any question please contact Mrs. Cardenas