

# Five Reasons to File Your FAFSA

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Submitting your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) can be a complicated process. From digging through information on your family's assets to decoding income tax forms, filling out the FAFSA is a hassle, so why bother? Here are five reasons why it's worth it.

## **1. Federal Aid**

Do you want some of the more than \$80 billion the federal government provides in grants, loans and work-study programs every year? Federal Student Aid programs are the largest source of student aid in the United States. The only way to be considered for Pell Grants, Perkins Loans, Stafford Loans and more is by submitting your FAFSA.

## **2. State Aid**

Your FAFSA also puts you in consideration for state financial aid programs. Eligibility and deadline dates for these programs differ by state, but they all have one thing in common -- they require the FAFSA. Learn more about the financial aid your state offers its residents at your state's higher education agency.

## **3. School Aid**

Colleges and private scholarship sponsors offer billions of dollars in financial aid. Even if you don't have a high level of financial need, you may be eligible for these awards. Most colleges and many private scholarship sponsors require students to submit their FAFSA to be considered for financial aid. Some school and private scholarship programs are specifically designed for students who were rejected for federal financial aid, so even if you don't think you'll qualify for federal aid, it's a smart move to submit your FAFSA.

## **4. It's Free**

A completed FAFSA will put you in consideration for federal, state, college and private scholarships and it's completely free. The only thing you'll spend completing your FAFSA is a few minutes of your time, and you could get thousands of dollars of financial aid in return.

## **5. Getting Help is Easy and Free**

Not only is submitting your FAFSA free, but it may be easier to complete than you realize. You can get the paper FAFSA form at your school counselor's office or public library, print it off from the FAFSA Web site, or fill it out online. Don't know how to figure out your parents' net worth? Don't worry. When you complete your FAFSA online help is built into the system, so you won't get bogged down by the form's confusing financial jargon. You can still submit your questions online at the FAFSA Web site if you choose to fill out the paper form, or you can call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

Many high schools and colleges offer help with FAFSA Day, an event usually in February. If your school doesn't host a FAFSA Day, check with other schools in your area to see if you can attend their FAFSA Day.

Federal, state and private financial aid can be within your reach when you submit your FAFSA, so what are you waiting for? FAFSA forms become available on or before January 1st each year. Submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1st to have the best shot at financial aid.

Don't just send in your FAFSA and expect the money to start rolling in. Many financial aid programs require additional forms besides the FAFSA, so check the requirements for state, school and private awards to make sure your application is complete.