

Common FAFSA Completion Problem Areas

This resource sheet was created for High School Counselors. The list below highlights the most critical areas of concern, but is not all-inclusive. For additional resources, see the bottom of the page.

1. **APPLY ONLINE.** The FAFSA online application is easy to complete. If needed, there are detailed instructions available for each question. In addition, there are helpful online chat representatives. The FAFSA takes most people 23 minutes to complete.

2. **DO NOT LEAVE FIELDS BLANK.** Unless the instructions state to leave a field blank, enter a zero ("0") or "not applicable" instead of leaving a blank field.

3. **USE ACCURATE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER.** Double and triple check the numbers entered for the social security number field to ensure accuracy. If parents do not have a Social Security Number, list "000-00- 0000".

4. **USE LEGAL NAMES.** Enter name into FAFSA as it appears on the Social Security card. Do not enter nicknames or other spelling variations.

5. **LIST A COLLEGE.** Enter the Federal School Code for the college the student plans to attend. Student can list up to 10 colleges when completing the online FAFSA.

6. **SIGN AND DATE THE APPLICATION.** Both the student and ONE parent need to sign the FAFSA either electronically with a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) or with a traditional signature. When completing the FAFSA online, there are two options:
 - a) Student and parent each obtain an FSA ID to use as their electronic signatures,
 - OR**
 - b) Print the signature page, sign it and mail it in. A valid Social Security Number is required to complete the FSA ID process.

7. **DO NOT INCLUDE A COPY OF TAX RETURNS.** A copy of the student's and/or parents' tax returns is not needed as part of the FAFSA application process. Any information received besides the FAFSA application will be destroyed.

8. **MY PARENTS DO NOT FILE TAXES.** Even if parents do not file **or** are not required to file taxes, students should still complete a FAFSA to be considered for federal or state aid eligibility.

9. **COURT DETERMINED LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP.** Many students incorrectly answer “yes” to this question. The definition of legal guardianship does not include parents. Students are also not considered legal guardians of themselves. If unsure, refer to the FAFSA detailed instructions to answer this correctly.

10. **DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA).** If a student has been granted DACA status, enter “No, I am not a citizen or eligible noncitizen.” These students are not eligible for federal student aid, but may be eligible for private institutional aid which may require a FAFSA.

Resources for additional helpful tips when completing the FAFSA:

- <https://blog.ed.gov/2017/09/12-common-fafsa-mistakes-2/>
- <https://www.fastweb.com/financial-aid/articles/the-10-fafsa-mistakes-that-affect-financial-aid>
- http://www.nasfaa.org/Unique_Student_Circumstances
- <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/creating-using-fsaid.pdf>