FAFSA Filing Tips

The best way to complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)](#) is early, and online. If you apply online, your application will be processed faster and will likely be more accurate because the FAFSA Web site is designed to catch common errors. The online application also provides [worksheets](#) that will calculate amounts and enter them into the field(s) for you. It also allows you to skip questions that are not relative to your unique situation. You can save and continue the FAFSA at any time online and then sign your application electronically using a personal identification number (PIN) which you can get from the Federal Student Aid PIN Web site.

Tell your friends! The official FAFSA is at www.FAFSA.gov - not at a .com web site. If you go to a .com site, you will probably be asked to pay to submit the FAFSA. Remember, the first F in "FAFSA" stands for **"free"** – so use the official government site to submit your application.

Making mistakes on your FAFSA could delay your application and possibly make you lose out on some financial aid.

Common Errors to Avoid When Completing the FAFSA

The most common errors people make are listed below. As you complete the FAFSA try to avoid these errors:

- **Listing incorrect Name:** Use your LEGAL name, exactly as it appears on your Social Security Card. If you have gotten married, but have not LEGALLY changed your name with the Social Security Office, do not use your married name.
- **Listing incorrect Social Security Number or Driver's license number:** Check these entries and have someone else check them too. Triple check to be sure.
- **Incorrectly identifying as eligible to file 1040A or EZ:** If you file any schedules, are self-employed, or itemize your deductions – you are not eligible to file a 1040A or EZ. Listing you are eligible may delay processing of your application.
- **Entering the wrong federal income tax paid amount:** Obtain your federal income paid amount from your income tax return forms, not your W-2 form(s).
- **Listing marital status incorrectly:** Only write yes if you're currently married on the day you sign the FAFSA or Renewal FAFSA – not if you are planning on getting married.
- **Listing parent marital status incorrectly:** The custodial parent's marital status is needed; if they've remarried, you'll need the stepparent's information too.
- **Leaving blank fields:** Enter a '0' or 'not applicable' instead of leaving a blank. Too many blanks may cause miscalculations and an application rejection.
- **Using commas or decimal points in numeric fields:** Always round to the nearest dollar; adding commas and decimal points may cause the figures to appear higher.
- **Leaving the question about drug-related offenses blank:** A conviction doesn't necessarily disqualify you from getting aid.
- **Forgetting to list the college:** CSU Long Beach's code is 001139
- **Forgetting to sign and date:** If you're filling out the paper FAFSA, be sure to sign it. If you're filing electronically, be sure to obtain your PIN from www.pin.ed.gov. Your PIN is your electronic signature and will always be assigned to you only.
- **Forgetting to have your parent(s) sign and date:** If you are a dependent student, your parent(s) must sign the FAFSA. Be sure to have them obtain a PIN from www.pin.ed.gov. The PIN is their electronic signature.
- **Entering the wrong address:** Your permanent address is not your campus or summer address.

Additional Tips

Much of the financial information you need to provide is on your tax forms. Completing your taxes early can make the application process easier because you'll have the financial information you need in one place. You can estimate your financial information using previous tax years and correct the amounts on the form later by going to the corrections page on the FAFSA Web site. If you are not required to file taxes you still have to fill out a FAFSA to get financial aid.

Here is a list of materials that will help you complete the FAFSA:

- Your Social Security Number (can be found on Social Security card)
- Your driver's license (or State ID)
- Your W-2 Forms for the previous year and other records of money earned
- Your (and your spouse's, if you are married) most recent Federal Income Tax Return – IRS Form 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ, 1040Telefile, foreign tax return, or tax return for Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia
- Your parent's Federal Income Tax Return for the previous year (if you are a dependent student as defined by federal criteria)
- Your (and your parent's if dependent) current bank statements
- Your (and your parent's if dependent) current business and investment mortgage information, business and farm records, stock, bond, and other investment records
- Documentation that you are a U.S. permanent resident or other eligible noncitizen

There are resources available if you decide you need assistance filling out the FAFSA, check the [Help section on the FAFSA Web site](#), or call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED AID (1-800-433-3243).