College Students and Parents: What You Need to Know About the 2017–18 FAFSA®

What's changing for 2017–18?

Starting with the 2017–18 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®), these changes will be in effect:

- **You'll be able to submit your FAFSA® earlier.** You can file your 2017–18 FAFSA as early as Oct. 1, 2016, rather than beginning on Jan. 1, 2017. The earlier submission date will be a permanent change, enabling you to complete and submit a FAFSA as early as October 1 every year.
- **You'll use earlier income and tax information.** Beginning with the 2017–18 FAFSA, students will be required to report income and tax information from an earlier tax year. For example, on the 2017–18 FAFSA, you—and your parent(s), as appropriate—will report your 2015 income and tax information, rather than your 2016 income and tax information.

The following table provides a summary of key dates as we transition to using the early FAFSA submission timeframe and earlier tax information.

When a Student Is Attending College (School Year)	When a Student Can Submit a FAFSA	Which Year's Income and Tax Information Is Required
July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016	January 1, 2015–June 30, 2016	2014
July 1, 2016–June 30, 2017	January 1, 2016–June 30, 2017	2015
July 1, 2017–June 30, 2018	**October 1, 2016–June 30, 2018**	**2015**
July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019	October 1, 2017–June 30, 2019	2016

How will the changes benefit me?

We expect that you'll benefit in these ways:

- Because the FAFSA will ask for older income and tax information, you will already have done your taxes by the time you fill out your FAFSA, and you won't need to estimate your tax information and then go back into the FAFSA later to update it.
- Because you'll already have done your taxes by the time you fill out your FAFSA, you may be able to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (IRS DRT) to automatically import your tax information into your FAFSA. (Learn about the IRS DRT at **StudentAid.gov/irsdrt**.)
- Because the FAFSA is available earlier, you may feel less pressure due to having more time to explore and understand your financial aid options and apply for aid before your state's and school's deadlines.

Will FAFSA deadlines be earlier since the application is launching earlier?

We expect that most state and school deadlines will remain approximately the same as in 2016–17. However, several states that offer first come, first served financial aid will change their deadlines from "as soon as

possible after January 1" to "as soon as possible after October 1." So, as always, it's important that you check your state and school deadlines so that you don't miss out on any aid. State deadlines are on **fafsa.gov**; school deadlines are on schools' websites.

Since the 2017–18 FAFSA asks for the same tax and income information as the 2016–17 FAFSA, will my 2016–17 FAFSA information automatically be carried over into my 2017–18 renewal FAFSA?

No; too much could have changed since you filed your last FAFSA, and there's no way to predict what might be different, so you'll need to enter the information again. However, keep in mind that many people are eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool to automatically import their tax information into the FAFSA, making the process of reporting tax information quick and easy.

Can I choose to report 2016 information if my family's financial situation has changed since our 2015 taxes were filed?

You must report the information the FAFSA asks for. If your family's income has changed substantially since the 2015 tax year, talk to the financial aid office at your school about the family's situation.

Note: The FAFSA asks for marital status as of the day you fill it out. So if you're married now but weren't in 2015 (and therefore didn't file taxes as married), you'll need to add your spouse's income to your FAFSA. Similarly, if you filed your 2015 taxes as married but you're no longer married when you fill out the FAFSA, you'll need to subtract your spouse's income.

Will I receive aid offers earlier if I apply earlier?

Not necessarily; some schools will make offers earlier while others won't. If you're thinking of transferring to another school, you might want to look at the College Scorecard at **collegescorecard.ed.gov** to compare costs at different schools while you wait for your aid offers to arrive. Note: You should be aware that the maximum Federal Pell Grant for 2017–18 won't be known until early 2017, so keep in mind that even if you do receive an aid offer early, it could change due to various factors.

How will I know what schools to list on the FAFSA if I haven't decided which schools I'll be applying to?

List any schools you're considering applying to, and we'll send your FAFSA information to them. Later, if you decide to apply to additional schools that you didn't list on the FAFSA, you can log back in at **fafsa.gov** and add those schools.

Where can I get more information about—and help with—the FAFSA?

Visit **StudentAid.gov/fafsa**; and remember, as you fill out your FAFSA at **fafsa.gov**, you can refer to help text for every question and (during certain times of day) chat online with a customer service representative.

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