

## **FAFSA Simplification for First-Time Applicants**

Starting in the 2024-2025 academic year, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and related federal aid processes are going through significant changes known collectively as “FAFSA Simplification”. For first-time FAFSA filers, we’ve put together this guide on some of the terms and steps of the process so you’re ready for the FAFSA’s launch.

### **General Knowledge**

To begin, we will look at a few pieces of general knowledge which apply to all applicants filing a 2024-2025 FAFSA:

- Base Year 2022 – The term “base year” refers to the tax year that you will report on the FAFSA. 2022 is the base year for the 2024-2025 FAFSA and any income received in 2022 by a contributor must be reported on the FAFSA.
  - Child support received by a contributor is the exception. Child support, while often considered income, will be reported as an asset on the 2024-2025 FAFSA.
- Assets – Unlike income, which is reported from a set tax year (2022, for example), contributors’ assets should be reported on the FAFSA as of the day the FAFSA was submitted.
  - Again, child support received by a contributor is the exception. Child support, while reported as an asset, should be reported as of the end of the most recently completed calendar year. In other words, if the FAFSA is filed in 2023, child support received in 2022 should be reported.

### **Preparing to File Your FAFSA**

Before you start the FAFSA, there are a few steps you should take to ensure that you have everything you need to complete the FAFSA in one sitting:

- Contributors – The term contributors refer to all persons whose information is required on the applicant’s FAFSA. This includes but is not limited to: the student; the student’s parent(s); and, if the parent is remarried, their spouse. Make sure to identify who the applicant’s contributors will be before beginning your FAFSA. If you are not sure who the applicant’s contributors should be, review this helpful [workflow chart](#) or review the federal government’s [website](#).
  - If the applicant’s parents are divorced or separated, only one parent’s information must be included on the FAFSA. Whichever parent provided over 50% of the applicant’s financial support in the last year is the contributor whose information will be required.
- Federal Student Aid (FSA) IDs – The student applicant and a parent will each need to create an FSA ID. This credential will be used to provide consent and then submit your FAFSA. If the applicant’s parents are married or in a domestic partnership but file separate tax returns, *both* parents will need to create their own FSA ID. If the applicant’s parent contributor is remarried, their spouse will need to create their own FSA ID.
- Financial Information – As most of the questions on the FAFSA relate to the applicant’s and family’s finances, it should be no surprise that you will need to have some financial records on hand while completing the FAFSA:
  - The applicant’s and other contributors’ 2022 federal tax returns. While most federal tax information will be transferred into your FAFSA using the FUTURE Act Direct Data Exchange (FA-DDX) tool, some questions may need to be manually answered based on data from the tax return.

- The FAFSA's questions regarding assets should be answered with figures as of the day the FAFSA is being completed. Applicants and other contributors should gather copies of the most recently available bank statements, investment statements, and other such documentation of their assets.

### **FAFSA Filing Process**

Once you have taken the preparatory steps above, you're ready to file your FAFSA! The information below is by no means a comprehensive list of the questions and steps you will be presented with when filing the FAFSA. We hope to highlight the larger trends that you will see as you move through the FAFSA to help smooth the way for you.

- Roles – As each contributor enters the FAFSA, they will be asked to select their role in completing the FAFSA (e.g. applicant, parent, etc.).
- Contributor Invitations – Assuming the student applicant logs into the FAFSA and completes their portion first, they will be asked to enter the information for their parent contributor(s) including an email address. The FAFSA will send an email to their parent contributor(s) letting them know that their portion of the FAFSA is available for completion.
- Onboarding – The first time a contributor accesses their portion of the FAFSA, they will view an onboarding video to walk them through the basics of submitting the 2024-2025 FAFSA.
- Consent – Each contributor will be required to provide consent for the FAFSA to use their personal and federal tax information in processing of the FAFSA. Consent must be provided by *all* contributors, even if they did not file taxes in 2022.
- FUTURE Act Direct Data Exchange (FA-DDX) – Each contributor who filed a U.S. tax return in 2022 will be required to use the FUTURE Act Direct Data Exchange tool for their FAFSA to be valid and processed. After contributor consent is provided, the FA-DDX will transfer the contributor's federal tax information into the FAFSA. The FAFSA *cannot* be submitted until the FA-DDX has been used for all tax-filing contributors.
- FAFSA Submission Summary – After submission of the FAFSA, the applicant will receive a FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS) which will provide an estimate of the applicant's federal aid eligibility, a record of all answers given to the FAFSA's questions, and a list of "comments" which may be informational or may direct the applicant or other contributors to make necessary updates or changes to their FAFSA.

The 2024-2025 FAFSA is expected to be available by January 1, 2024. The Financial Aid Office will post additional information and resources to our website as they become available and is here to help you navigate this process. Please don't hesitate to [contact](#) your financial aid counselor if you have questions.