

2025-2026 FAFSA Form: Things To Know

By [John Hupalo](#)

[The College Investor](#)

August 30, 2024

The Department of Education [announced](#) key details about the 2025 - 2026 FAFSA.

The Good News: the new FAFSA form is not changing from last year's major revision.

The Bad News: it won't widely be available until [December](#).

With that in mind, here's what you should be doing now to prepare, why you should do an estimated SAI now, and what you can do to be ready to file the FAFSA when it is available.

How We Got Here

On June 14, 2024, the [U.S. Department of Education \("ED"\) announced](#) it was working toward an October 1 release date for the 2025-26 FAFSA cycle and "to ensure a smooth user experience ... the form would remain consistent" with the prior year form. On August 7, 2024, [ED announced](#) that the new form will be launched in a two-step process. On October 1, the form will be available to a limited test group of students and colleges. By December 1, ED plans to make the application available to all students. We're also supposed to stay tuned for more information about the test group. ED promises details about how the test group will work including how applicants may sign-up to be included in the test group, which will initially start with "hundreds and expanding to tens of thousands of applicants."

ED's 2025-26 FAFSA updates are mostly behind-the-scenes tweaks to technical items in the charts, such as [income protection allowance](#) values as an example, that feed into the formulas for determining SAI. The inputs required from students and contributors are unchanged from last year.

How To Prepare Now To Be Ready To File The FAFSA Later

Even though the FAFSA won't be launched until later this year, it's essential you start to prepare now. Here's what you can do to be ready:

- **Use the [free Student Aid Index Estimator](#).** An early estimate of student's SAI will help shape a college list with schools that are likely to be most affordable. Unlike other SAI tools that offer users only a number, My College Corner's SAI estimator offers users a robust experience: help screens, context about what SAI means, FAQs and a downloadable report. NOTE: A student's "official" Student Aid Index used to award financial aid can only come from the U.S. Department of Education which transmits it to the colleges after receiving and processing a student's completed FAFSA.
- **Identify contributors (usually parent(s) or guardians) who will provide financial information.** The FAFSA requires income and asset information for the student and parents. For separated or divorced parents, the parent who provided the most financial support for the child in the prior year is the one who needs to provide the prior-prior year tax information.
- **Make sure tax forms for 2023 have been filed** and are correct for the student and Contributor(s) who need to provide tax information.
- **Gather asset information.** Information about student and contributor income comes from 2023 tax filings, but asset information comes from current statements. Take some time to identify which assets need to be reported and how you will derive the value of the asset, particularly the value of small businesses and farms.
- **Go to [Studentaid.gov](#) and [create an FSA ID](#) for the student and Contributor(s).** This ID will be used by the student and contributor for a variety of uses. The FSA ID is akin to a Social Security number in that once assigned, it does not change. If you already have an FSA ID (perhaps for another student), you are all set. Use that FSA ID for this year's FAFSA process. If you do not have one or if your student does not have one, create it now. No sense waiting. Both the student and the contributor need their own

respective FSA IDs.

- **Know the college and state FAFSA filing deadlines.** States and colleges have different deadlines to file the FAFSA form. Check your state's FAFSA filing deadline and the filing deadline for each college to which your student plans to send an application. These deadlines are often inflexible so do this ASAP. Check to see if additional applications may be required as well. (Deadlines can be misleading as much aid is often given out if you complete forms right before the deadlines – Cary)
- **Look for scholarships to reduce the cost of college.** Free money is good money, and there is plenty out there. Try this [free Scholarship Search](#) at MyCollegeCorner.com

Who Should File The FAFSA For The 2025 - 2026 Academic Year?

The short answer: all students who will be enrolled in college and would like to be considered for any form of financial aid in Award Year 25-26. Even students in the most affluent households with high incomes and lots of assets could benefit from filing a FAFSA. [Studentaid.gov](#) offers excellent information about the many types of student aid offered including the [Direct Student Loan Program](#), [Work-Study Programs](#), and [grants](#).

Some federal aid programs do not require students to be in low-earning households. For example, **all students, regardless of their family's financial situation or their SAI, are eligible for a [Direct Student Loan](#). To get a Direct Student Loan, students must file the FAFSA. No FAFSA – no loan.**

The Last Word

The process of planning and paying for college is stressful enough for families without the added pressure of a delayed FAFSA form. But this does not mean that you need to be paralyzed awaiting word of when the form will be available. Today, you can prepare for the time the FAFSA form will be available by getting an estimated SAI, applying for an FSA ID and following the other tips to prepare. **Time is on your side. Use it wisely.**