

## 2014-15 FAFSA Instructions & Helpful Hints

### Step One: Gather your documents

- Know your personal information, including social security number, date of birth, FAFSA PIN, Driver's License Number (if you have one), Alien Registration Number (if you are not a US Citizen).
  - You (and at least one parent, if you are dependent) need a Personal Identification Number, or PIN. To apply for or retrieve a forgotten PIN, go to [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov).
- Federal tax information, including IRS W-2 information for you (and your spouse, if you are married), and your parents (if you are a dependent student). Review: [Am I dependent or independent, according to the FAFSA?](#)
  - If you have not yet filed an income tax return, use **estimated** tax information.
  - Use income records for the year prior to the academic year for which you are applying: for instance, if you are filling out the 2014–15 FAFSA, you will need 2013 tax information.
- Records of your untaxed income, such as child support received, interest income, and veterans non-education benefits, for you, and for your parents if you are providing parent information
- Information on cash; savings and checking account balances; investments, including real estate (not the primary home); and business and farm assets for you, and for your parents (if you are providing parent information)

### Step Two: Login to [www.FAFSA.gov](http://www.FAFSA.gov)

- Use the [FAFSA on the Web Worksheet](#) with your documents to guide you through the questions to expect. Financial Aid highly recommends that you only submit the FAFSA online, not via paper.
- Common mistakes to avoid:
  - If your parents are separated/divorced, report only the information for the parent with whom you lived most in the last 12 months. S/he is considered your “custodial parent.”
  - If your parent is remarried, the step-parent's income must be reported. FAFSA looks at the custodial household.
  - Dependent students must provide parental information. To determine if you are dependent or independent, according to the FAFSA, click [here](#).
  - If your parents refuse to provide financial information and/or support, save your work and contact our office for assistance.
  - **DON'T** report:
    - Untaxed Social Security Income
    - Welfare benefits
    - The earned income credit or the additional child tax credit from the federal tax return
    - Federal self-employment tax or the amount of taxes withheld from Form W-2.
  - **DO** report:
    - Contributions to tax deferred retirement plans (Box 12 of the 2013 W-2 wage forms)
    - Contributions to IRA's and Keough plans
    - Child support received for all children in the household (not just for you, the student.)
    - U.S. Income Tax Paid from line 56 (Form 1040) or line 35 (Form 1040A) or line 11 (1040EZ.)
- Submit the FAFSA by signing electronically with your PIN. If you are dependent, your parent will be required to submit their PIN as well.
  - You will receive an email after your FAFSA is processed, in approximately 3-4 business days. Review the results on-line.

### Step Three: Review your [Student Aid Report](#)

- The **BIGGEST** mistake students make is not reviewing the results of the FAFSA after it has been processed. You should read the comments section to see if there are any potential problems that would delay the processing of your financial aid.
- The processed FAFSA will include a variety of messages, including any problems that need your attention. Failure to do so may cause delays or loss of some types of financial aid.
- Don't forget your TAP – If you complete your FAFSA on the Web, you will have the option of applying for TAP by answering some additional questions. If you choose not to, once your FAFSA is processed New York State will send you an email asking you to apply on-line at <https://www.tapweb.org/totw/>.