

## Common Errors on the FAFSA

- **Not Using the Correct Website – FAFSA.gov**
  - **The FAFSA is FREE**
- **Not Filling Out the FAFSA Form as Soon as It's Available**
  - The FAFSA opens 10/1
  - Do not wait until the last minute
- **Not Getting an FSA ID Before Filling Out the FAFSA Form**
- **Not Using Your FSA ID to Start the FAFSA Form**
  - The FSA ID is the way that parents and students will sign in, access the DRT (date retrieval tool), and sign the FAFSA
- **Not Reading Definitions Carefully**
  - **Legal guardianship**—To determine your dependency status, the FAFSA form asks, “Does someone other than your parent or stepparent have legal guardianship of you, as determined by a court in your state of legal residence?” Many students incorrectly answer “yes” here. For this question, the definition of legal guardianship does not include your parents—even if they were appointed by a court to be your guardians. Also, you’re not your own legal guardian.
  - **Parent**—The FAFSA form has very specific guidelines about which parent’s information needs to be reported. Spoiler alert: It has nothing to do with who claims you on their taxes. <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out/parent-info#who-is-parent>
  - **Number of family members (household size)**—The FAFSA form has a specific definition of how your household size or your parents’ household size should be determined. Read the instructions carefully. Many students incorrectly report this number, especially when the student doesn’t physically live with the parent.
  - **Number of family members in college**—Enter the number of people in your (or your parents’) household who will attend college at the same time as you. Don’t forget to include yourself, but don’t include your parents in this number, even if they’re in college. This number should never be greater than your number of family members.
  - **Net worth of investments**—We have outlined some specific items that should and shouldn’t be included as investments on the FAFSA form. For example, a college savings plan such as a 529 account is considered an investment\*, while the value of the home in which you live and the value of your retirement accounts are not. We highly recommend that you read this to make sure you are reporting this information correctly.
  - **Taxable college grants and scholarships**—For this question, you report only college grant and scholarship amounts that were reported to the IRS as income. That means you should not use the amount listed on your 1098-T; you should report the amount listed on your tax return. Do not use the number in the adjusted gross income (AGI) field. Here are the tax line numbers you should reference when asked this question. If you didn’t file taxes, you should enter zero.
- **Inputting Incorrect Information**
  - **Confusing parent information with student information**—I know there are many parents out there who fill out the FAFSA form for their children, but remember, it is the

student's application. When the FAFSA form says "you" or "your," it's referring to the student, so make sure to enter your (the student's) information. If the form is asking for your parent's information, it will specify that in the question.

- Entering information that doesn't match your FSA ID information—After you create an FSA ID, your information (name, Social Security number, date of birth) is sent to the Social Security Administration to be verified. If you then enter a different name, Social Security number, and/or date of birth on the FAFSA form, you'll receive an error message. This is often the result of a typo or mixing up student information and parent information. To avoid delays in completing and processing your application, triple-check that you have entered your information correctly. If you encounter this error, here's how you can resolve the error.
- Amount of your income tax: Here, the FAFSA form is asking for your assessed income tax liability, not the amount of income tax withheld and not your AGI. I know this can be complicated. To avoid this common error, either transfer your tax information to the FAFSA form using the IRS DRT, or click here to find out which tax line number you should refer to when answering this question. (Note: It depends on which IRS form you filed.)
- **Not Signing the FAFSA Form**
  - So many students answer every single question that is asked, but fail to actually sign the FAFSA form with their FSA ID and submit it. This happens for many reasons—maybe you forgot your FSA ID, or your parent isn't with you to sign with the parent FSA ID—so your application is left incomplete. Don't let this happen to you.
  - If you don't know your FSA ID, select "Forgot username" and/or "Forgot password."
  - If you don't have an FSA ID, create one -- <https://fsaid.ed.gov>

Partly taken from -- <https://blog.ed.gov/2017/09/12-common-fafsa-mistakes-2/>

## Know Your Deadlines

State – July 1