

Federal student aid application process

Step 1	Get a PIN, a personal identification number. A PIN lets you apply, "sign" your online FAFSA, make corrections to your application information, and more—all online. Go to www.pin.ed.gov .
Step 2	Collect the documents needed to apply, including income tax returns and W-2 forms (and other records of income). A full list of what you need is at www.fafsa.ed.gov . Tax return not completed at the time you apply? Estimate the tax information, apply, and correct information later.
Step 3	Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) between January 1, 2008, and June 30, 2008 (no exceptions to either date!). BUT, apply as soon as possible after January 1 to meet school deadlines (see note at bottom of page). Apply online (the faster and easier way) by going to www.fafsa.ed.gov .
Step 4	Review your Student Aid Report (SAR)—the result of your FAFSA application. If necessary, make changes online. Your complete, correct SAR will contain your Expected Family Contribution (EFC)—the number used to determine your federal student aid eligibility.
Step 5	If you are selected for verification, your school's financial aid office will ask you to submit tax returns and other documents, as appropriate. Be sure to meet the school's deadline, or you will not be able to get federal student aid.
Step 6	Whether you're selected for verification or not, make sure the financial aid office at the school has all the information needed to determine your eligibility.
Step 7	<p>All students: Contact the financial aid office if you have any questions about the aid being offered.</p> <p>First-time applicants: Review award letters from schools to compare amounts and types of aid being offered. Decide which school to attend based on a combination of (a) how well the school suits your needs and (b) its affordability after all aid is taken into account.</p>
<p>Note: You also might be able to get financial aid from your state government, your school, or a private scholarship. Research nonfederal aid early (ideally, start in the spring of your junior year of high school). Be sure to meet all application deadlines!</p>	

Source: U.S. Department of Education