

Federal Student Aid Estimator Guide

2027 Application Cycle

Great Jobs 

A chance to learn. The power to earn.

**SCHOLARS
FIRST**

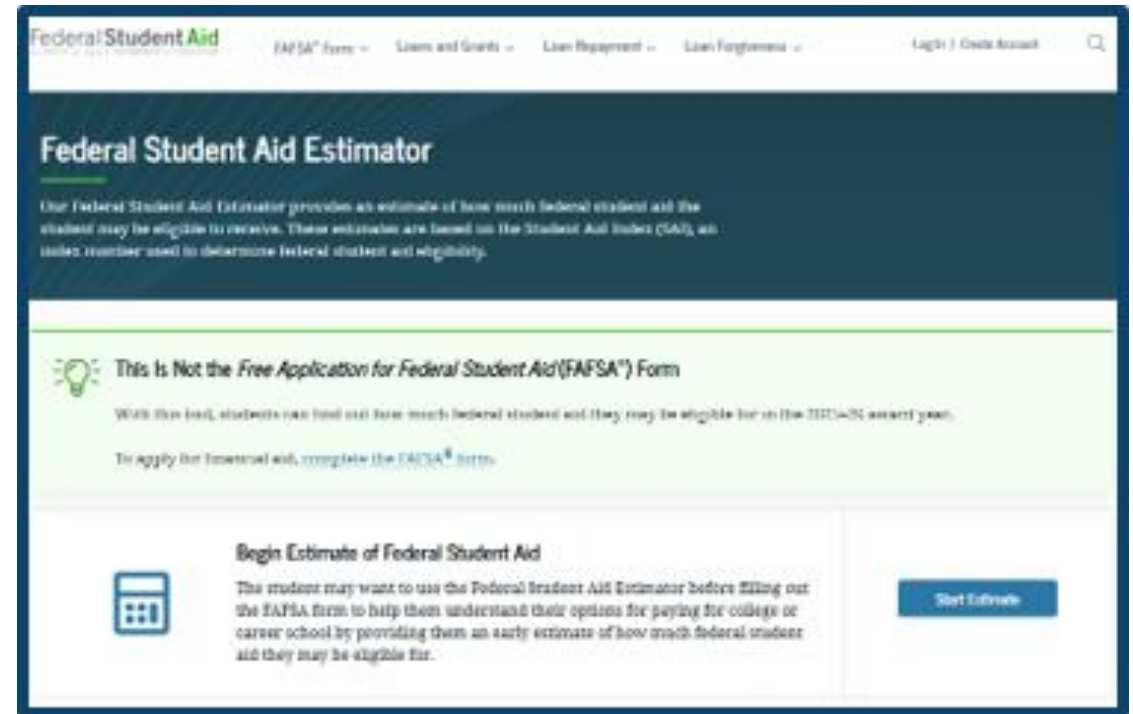
READY TO BEGIN?

studentaid.gov/ai



What is the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Estimator? ([Link](#))

- A free financial aid calculation that provides an early estimate of a student's eligibility for federal student aid.
- Assists families in planning for college!



How and Why does KC Scholars Use the FSA Estimator?

- The **Student Aid Index (SAI)** calculated on the [Federal Student Aid Estimator](#) helps determine low to modest income applicants.
- The SAI must be 12,000 or less to be eligible to apply for the [11-Grade College Scholarship](#) and [Adult Learner Scholarship](#).
- Applicants are required to upload the downloaded PDF of estimated SAI to their application.
- This step is completed first within the application (Eligibility) to ensure eligibility is met by applicants before proceeding.
- **AWARD NOTE:** KC Scholars will verify that the SAI remains below 12,000 for all scholarship awardees prior to college enrollment. Awardees will be required to submit a FAFSA Submission Summary, FAFSA ineligible students will submit an alternative form.

What items are needed to fill out the FSA Estimator?

Student Financial Information

- A copy of 2025 tax returns.
 - *If you did not file taxes, you are not required to provide personal financial information.*
- Includes adjusted gross income (AGI), total assets, and annual child support received.
- AGI is found on IRS Form 1040.
- Assets include money in cash, savings, and checking accounts.

Students' Spouses' Financial Information

- If the student is independent, their household financials—including their spouse's financials if the student is married—are needed, such as their tax filing status, household income, total assets, and annual child support received.

Students' Parents' Financial Information

- If you are a dependent student, you will need to provide parents' financial information. This includes adjusted gross income (AGI), total assets, and annual child support received.
- A copy of 2025 tax returns.
 - *If parents were not required to file taxes, you do not need to provide parent's financial information.*
- Parent's AGI is found on IRS Form 1040 from 2025 tax information.
- Assets include money in cash, savings, and checking accounts.

Need to Know: Independent vs. Dependent

- [Dependency Status](#) explains whether a student is dependent or independent.
- [Visit resource](#) and answer question prompts to determine status.
 - Answered "**Yes**" to one or more questions: **Independent** and will not be required to provide parent information.
 - Answered "**No**" to every question: **Dependent** and must provide parent information.

Independent Student

For the 2026–27 FAFSA® form, an independent student is born before Jan. 1, 2003, married (and not separated), a graduate/professional student, a veteran, a member of the U.S. armed forces, an orphan, a ward of the court, a current or former foster youth, someone who is or was in a legal guardianship, someone with legal dependents (other than a spouse), an emancipated minor, or unaccompanied and homeless or at risk of being homeless.

Dependent Student

A student who does not meet any of the criteria for an independent student.

Need to Know: Who's my parent?

- A **parent** means your legal (biological or adoptive) parent or a person that the state has determined to be your legal parent. A **stepparent** is considered a parent if they have adopted you. Stepparents that have not adopted you will be identified as a parent spouse.
- If your **parents are married** (not separated), both of your parents' information must be included on the FAFSA form, regardless of whether your parents are of the same or opposite sex. If your parents didn't file taxes jointly, then both of your parents are contributors. If your parents filed taxes jointly, **only one parent is required** to be a contributor and will report information for both parents.
- If your **parents are not married to each other and live together**, both of your parents are contributors and their information must be included on the FAFSA form, regardless of whether your parents are of the same or opposite sex.
- If your **parents are divorced, separated, or never married, and don't live together**, the parent who provided more financial support during the last 12 months is the contributor and must provide their information. If both parents provided an equal amount of financial support or if they don't support you financially, the parent with the greater income and assets is the contributor and must provide their information.
- If your **parent is widowed**, that parent is the contributor and must provide their information.

Additional Resources:

Who's my parent?

- [Is My Parent A Contributor When I Fill Out My FAFSA Form? graphic](#)
- [Reporting Parent Information](#)
- [Who's my FAFSA Parent? wizard](#)

Questions and topics answered:

- What if I have a stepparent?
- What if my stepparent is widowed?
- What if my parents are in a same-sex marriage?
- What if I live with someone other than my parents?
- Can't provide parent information due to an unusual circumstance.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth.
- Parents have special financial circumstances.
- Parents unwilling to provide their information.
- Concern providing parent information due to citizenship status.

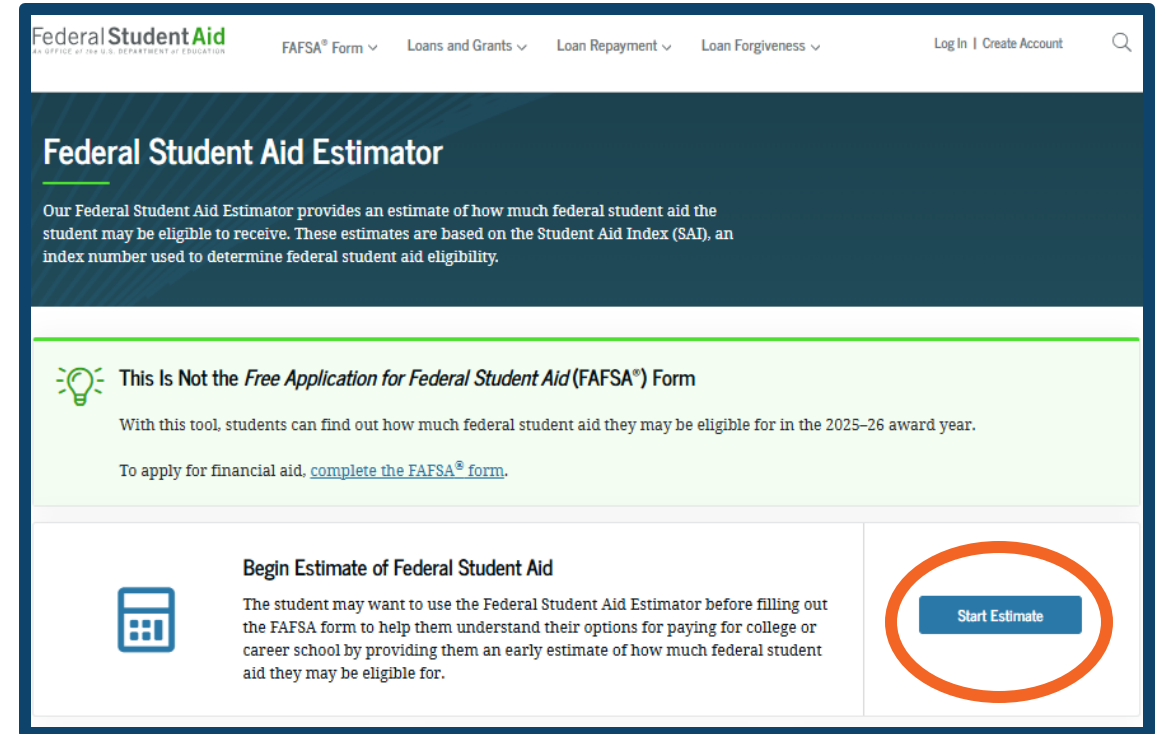


Let's begin the Student Aid Estimator!

(Visit: studentaid.gov/aid-estimator)

Home Page

- Visit <https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/> to begin and click "Start Estimate".
- Refer to the "Help" link on each page or (?) next to each question if you need more information.
- Questions will change on the screen according to answers provided.



Federal Student Aid Estimator

1

Student Information

2

Family Information

3

Financial Information

Student Information

Let's start the student's federal student aid estimate by gathering some basic information about the student.



Who Is Considered a Student

For the purposes of the Federal Student Aid Estimator, a "student" is an individual who has or aspires to enroll in a school that is eligible for federal student aid and who can use this tool to estimate how much federal student aid they may be able to get.

[Why do we ask for students' personal information? ▾](#)

What is the student's date of birth?

Month	Day	Year

Step 1: Student Information

- Enter **STUDENT** information.
- Answer all questions.
- All applicants should select "First year (freshmen)."

When the student begins the 2027–28 school year, what will their grade level be?

☒ First year (freshman)

☐ Second year (sophomore)

Step 2: Student Personal Circumstances

- These questions will help determine your [dependency status](#) for federal student aid purposes. Refer to slide 6 for help.
- Answer "No" to every question: **Dependent** and must provide parent information.
- Answer "Yes" to one or more questions: **Independent** and will not be required to provide parent information.

Instructions for a **DEPENDENT** student begin here.

Instructions for an **INDEPENDENT** student begin on slide 18.



Federal Student Aid Estimator

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Student Information

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Student Personal Circumstances

Let's look at the student's personal circumstances, which could affect how much federal student aid they may be eligible to receive.

Why do we ask this? ▾

Does the student have children or other dependents that they support?

☐ Yes

☒ No

What are the student's personal circumstances?

Select all that apply or "None of these apply."

☐ The student is currently serving on active duty or a veteran of the U.S. armed forces

☐ At any time since the student turned 13, they were an orphan (no living biological or adoptive parent)

☐ At any time since the student turned 13, they were in foster care or a ward of the court

?

☐ The student is or was a legally emancipated minor or in legal guardianship

?

☐ The student is unaccompanied and homeless

☐ None of these apply

Step 3: Parent Information

For a **DEPENDENT** student:

- This section will ask questions about you and your parent's background. Refer to slides 7-8 for help.
- These questions help determine which parent(s) information you will provide when filling out the rest of the Federal Student Aid Estimator.
- Answer the questions as they populate until you receive a **blue box** explaining which parent(s) information to provide.

Federal Student Aid Estimator

1

2

3

Student InformationFamily InformationFinancial Information

Parent Marital Status

For the purposes of the Federal Student Aid Estimator, "parent" means the student's legal (biological or adoptive) parent or stepparent.

A parent's marital status helps students determine whom to list as a parent when filling out the Federal Student Aid Estimator.

Are the student's parents married?

☐ Yes
Yes

☐ No
No

Previous

Continue

Step 4: Family Information

For a **DEPENDENT** student:

- Family Size includes yourself, parents, and the number of people who live with you and receive more than half of their support from your parent(s).

Federal Student Aid Estimator

✓
Student Information

2
Family Information

3
Financial Information

Family Size

Providing the student's family size helps to determine the amount of federal student aid they may be eligible to receive.

How many people are in the student's family, including the student?

Family Size

?

Step 5: Financial Information (Family)

For a **DEPENDENT** student:

Parent Income and Assets

- The first question you will respond to is about your parent's tax filing status.
 - *If parents were not required to file taxes, you do not need to provide parent's financial information.*
- Refer to the **blue subtext** to determine how to answer each question about you and your parent's finances.
- **Parent Income:** You will enter the total amount of adjusted gross income. This can be found on line 11 of IRS Form 1040.
- **Parent Assets:** Parent's total cash, savings, and checking accounts. Include net worth of businesses and investments if any.

Federal Student Aid Estimator

✓

✓

3

Student InformationFamily InformationFinancial Information

Parent Income and Assets

Provide information about the parent's income, assets, and tax filing status.

[Uncertain about income and assets? ▾](#)

Did the student's parent file a federal income tax return in 2025?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Parent Financials

Include the total income and assets of the student's parent(s). If the parent is married, this also includes their spouse's income and assets.

Parent Income

A parent's adjusted gross income includes more than just wages. It could also include alimony, Social Security, and business income.

Parent's Adjusted Gross Income

\$

.00

[Where to find this information?](#)

Step 6: Financial Information (Student)

For a **DEPENDENT** student:

Student Income and Assets

- Please complete the finance questions based on your 2025 tax information.
 - *If you did not file taxes, select "No" and you will not be required to provide financial information.*
- Refer to the **blue subtext** to determine how to answer each question about you and your parent's finances.

Federal Student Aid Estimator

✓

✓

3

Student InformationFamily InformationFinancial Information

Student Income and Assets

Provide information about the student's income, assets, and tax filing status.

[Uncertain about income and assets? ▾](#)

Did the student file a federal income tax return in 2025?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Student Income

A student's adjusted gross income includes more than just wages. It could also include alimony, Social Security, and business income.

Student's Adjusted Gross Income

\$

.00

[Where to find this information?](#)

Student Assets

Assets include the student's total cash, savings, and checking accounts; the net worth of their businesses and farms; and the net worth of their investments, including real estate (but not the home in which they live).

Student's Total Assets

\$

0

.00

[What are assets?](#)

Good news! The student may be eligible for federal student aid.



Estimates

These results are based on a method—the Student Aid Index (SAI)—a number used by a college's financial aid office to determine federal student aid eligibility.

Estimated Federal Student Aid

\$18,876

Incorrect Field for Eligibility

Federal student aid from the U.S. Department of Education helps cover expenses such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, food, housing, and travel—but it is not the only source of funding for the students' college costs. Scroll down to the "Other Factors To Consider" section to see some additional options that may help students lower their college costs.

Estimated Federal Pell Grant

\$7,395

Maximum Available Direct Loans

\$9,500

Average Work-Study Funds

\$1,981

These estimates are all approximate calculations.

[More information about these numbers](#) ▼

Estimated Student Aid Index (SAI)

Correct Field for Eligibility

SAI is an eligibility index number that the college's financial aid office uses to determine how much federal student aid the student would receive if the student attended their school. Taking into consideration the student's or parent's income and assets, a need-based analysis generates an estimated SAI value. Learn [how the SAI is calculated](#).

Estimated SAI

-1500

Results

For **DEPENDENT** and **INDEPENDENT** students:

- **DO NOT** input the Estimated Federal Student Aid (circled **red**) amount into the application. **This is NOT your SAI.**
- **DO** input the Estimated SAI (circled **blue**) number into the Eligibility section of the application and upload the PDF available for download (circled **orange**).



Print or Download Estimated Information

Print or Download PDF

Previous

Start Over



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Step 3: Family Information

For an **INDEPENDENT** student:

- Family Size includes yourself, parents, and the number of people who live with you and receive more than half of their support from your parent(s).

Family Size

Providing the student's family size helps to determine the amount of federal student aid they may be eligible to receive.

How many people are in the student's family, including the student?

Family Size



Step 4: Financial Information (Student)

For an **INDEPENDENT** student:

Income and Assets

- The first question you will respond to is about your (and spouse's, if married) tax filing status.
- Refer to the **blue subtext** to determine how to answer each question about you and your spouse's finances.
- **Student's Income:** You will enter the total amount of adjusted gross income. This can be found on line 11 of IRS Form 1040
- **Student's Assets:** Your total cash, savings, and checking accounts. Include net worth of businesses and investments if any.

Federal Student Aid Estimator

✓

✓

3

Student InformationFamily InformationFinancial Information

Student Income and Assets

Provide information about the student's income, assets, and tax filing status.

[Uncertain about income and assets? ▾](#)

Did the student file a federal income tax return in 2025?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Student Income

A student's adjusted gross income includes more than just wages. It could also include alimony, Social Security, and business income.

Student's Adjusted Gross Income

\$

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Student Assets

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Questions?

applicationhelp@greatjobskc.org