

Common Mistakes To Avoid When Completing The FAFSA

As you complete the FAFSA try to avoid these errors.

- **Leaving blank fields**—enter a '0' or 'not applicable' instead of leaving a blank. Too many blanks may cause miscalculations and an application rejection.
- **Using commas or decimal points in numeric fields**—always round to the nearest dollar.
- **Listing incorrect Social Security Number or Driver's license number**—check these entries and have someone else check them too. Triple check to be sure.
- **Entering the wrong federal income tax paid amount**—obtain your federal income tax paid amount from your income tax return forms, not your W-2 form(s).
- **Listing Adjusted Gross Income as equal to total income**—these are not the same figure. In most cases, the AGI is larger than the total income. This mistake is particularly common.
- **Listing marital status incorrectly**—only write yes if you're currently married. If you're separated, you're considered married. They want to know what your marital status is on the day you sign the FAFSA, or Renewal FAFSA.
- **Listing parent marital status incorrectly**—the custodial parent's marital status is needed; if they've remarried, you'll need the stepparent's information too.
- **Leaving the question about drug-related offenses blank**—If you're unsure about something, find out before you submit your FAFSA instead of leaving it blank. A conviction doesn't necessarily disqualify you from getting aid.
- **Forgetting to list the college**—obtain the Federal School Code for the college you plan on attending and list it—along with any other schools to which you've applied.
- **Forgetting to sign and date**—if you're filling out the paper FAFSA, be sure to sign it. If you're filing electronically, be sure to obtain your PIN from www.pin.ed.gov. Your PIN is your electronic signature and will always be assigned to you only.
- **Entering the wrong address**—your permanent address is not your campus or summer address.
- **Sending in a copy of your income tax returns**—you will be contacted if your information needs verification; you don't need to send a copy of your tax returns in with your application.

Additional Tips

Much of the financial information you need to provide is on your tax forms. Completing your taxes early can make the application process easier because you'll have the financial information you need in one place. You can estimate your financial information using previous tax years and correct the amounts on the form later by going to the corrections page on the FAFSA website. If you are not required to file taxes you still have to fill out a FAFSA to get financial aid.

This fact sheet was developed by the **National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators**. For more information, visit their web site at <http://www.nasfaa.org/redesign/ParentsStudents.html>

