Quick Reference Guide
on Fixing FSA ID and FAFSA Problems

The 2024-25 FAFSA and FSA ID launched with many problems. This tip sheet provides advice and workarounds tor dealing with these problems.

General Tips

☐ If you can't get past a particular page on the online FAFSA, one workaround is to delete the FAFSA and start over. You can delete the FAFSA using the menu on the upper right.

☐ If you make a mistake and can't correct it, delete the FAFSA.

☐ If there is no solution, try again on the next day. The U.S. Department of Education is actively working on fixing the problems. Who knows when the problem you're encountering might be fixed?

Problems with Invitations to Contributors

☐ If a contributor doesn't receive the invitation, try logging into StudentAid.gov. You should be able to access the form through the Dashboard or in My Activity. Once logged in, you can also try clicking on the link in the invitation email.

☐ If a student started the FAFSA and their parents or other contributors didn't get the invitation, try deleting the FAFSA and having the contributors start the FAFSA first and invite the student. A similar solution might work if the contributors started the FAFSA instead of the student.

☐ If a contributor filed a joint federal income tax return, only one taxpayer will receive the invitation. If the type of tax return is subsequently changed to married filing separately, they might not receive an invitation even though they are supposed to. If so, click on "Edit Contributor Information" in the My Activity section of StudentAid.gov, then on "Update Information." Entering the contributor information again is like removing and adding the contributor, which will cause the invitation to be sent.

Preventing Problems

☐ Don't stop filling out the FAFSA in the middle. Exiting the form can sometimes leave it in an inconsistent state that may prevent you from finishing the FAFSA later. Complete the FAFSA in one session from start to finish without interruption.

☐ If you are a permanent resident who has been naturalized and is now a U.S. citizen, check the box for "U.S. citizen or national" and provide your Social Security Number instead of your Alien Registration Number (A-Number).

☐ If you have been naturalized, update your citizenship status with the Social Security Administration (SSA), so that your citizenship status will be associated with your Social Security Number. Otherwise, it may cause a database mismatch when the FAFSA tries to confirm citizenship status with the SSA.

☐ If you reach the Confirmation Page when submitting the online FAFSA, print or save a copy of this page to provide proof of the date you filed the FAFSA. The Confirmation Page should also include a copy of your Student Aid Index (SAI), although that might not be the final SAI, if the U.S. Department of Education has not yet updated the financial aid formula for inflation. If the student submits the FAFSA first, they might not see the Confirmation Page with their SAI.

Address and Telephone Number Glitches

☐ The FSA ID is not currently able to handle country codes in telephone numbers. If you have a foreign telephone number, leave the phone number field blank or use a U.S. telephone number if you have one.

☐ In some cases, people who enter an address are unable to check the box to indicate that they don't have a Social Security Number. If so, delete the address and other information on the page. When you return to this page, check the box first before entering other information.

☐ If you used someone else's Social Security Number (SSN) for work, it may be associated with your address in IRS records (but not SSA records). When you check the box to indicate that you don't have an SSN, the FAFSA may ask you to provide your SSN. Try leaving the mailing address blank. You can update the form later with your address.

Getting Stuck in Some Sections of the FAFSA

☐ If you are unable to get past the address information section, try typing the mailing address instead of cutting and pasting it. If that doesn't work, try leaving it blank. You will be able to edit the address later. Likewise for the telephone number.

☐ Sometimes, when a contributor has a foreign address, glitches will prevent them from moving forward in the form. If this occurs, try using a U.S. address to move past the settings Confirmation Page, then return to the account settings to change the address to your foreign address. If you don't have a U.S. address, use 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202, which is the mailing address for the U.S. Department of Education. (Remember to change this address to your actual address.)

☐ If you are stuck on the Student Identity and Information page, go to Account Settings, then Contact Information, and select the terms and conditions checkbox, then click Save. This will ensure that the student's address is associated with their FSA ID. When you return to the Student Identity and Information page, you should see the student's mailing address and should be able to proceed past this page.

Infinite Loops

☐ If the FAFSA asks you to sign the form whenever you return to the form, even though you've already signed the FAFSA, do so. There is a glitch where the FAFSA will ask you to sign the form every time you visit the form if another contributor has not yet signed and submitted their section of the form.

☐ If you were born in the year 2000, you may be unable to review and submit your FAFSA because it keeps on sending you to the Student Unusual Circumstances page. There is currently no workaround for this problem.

When to Call for Help

☐ The best time to call the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) is when the call center opens in the morning or on a Wednesday. Be patient, as the call center is overloaded with many calls from people who are just as frustrated as you.

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Problem with Federal School Code Search Tool

□ Some colleges may have multiple entries in the search results, not necessarily adjacent to each other. There may also be defunct Federal School Codes. Colleges may have several codes to identify different programs or campuses. Be sure you choose the correct one. Federal School Codes may start with the number zero or the letter G, B or E, followed by five numbers. You may find the correct Federal School Code on the college's website in the financial aid office section.

Paper FAFSA

□ There is always the option of submitting the paper FAFSA, but this option is not recommended. The paper FAFSAs will be processed *after* all of the online FAFSAs have been processed, so this will not cause your FAFSA to be processed any quicker.

□ If you submit a paper FAFSA and submit an online FAFSA later, this will cause the paper FAFSA to be "rejected" because the online FAFSA will be processed first. The online FAFSA submission date will override the paper FAFSA submission date, so only do this if you do not need the priority of the earlier paper FAFSA submission date for state and college deadlines.

FAFSA Submission Status

□ Until the U.S. Department of Education starts processing FAFSAs, a signed and submitted FAFSA will be shown in the My Activity section of the StudentAid.gov Dashboard as "In Review."

□ The FAFSA submission status will be shown as "In Progress" whenever any required contributor has not yet signed and submitted their section of the form.

□ The FAFSA submission status will be shown as "Draft" if you have not completed, signed and submitted your section of the form.

□ You cannot make corrections or change colleges on the FAFSA until the FAFSA has been processed and you receive the FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS).

□ After you make corrections to the data elements on the FAFSA, you may need to wait a few days before changing the list of colleges on the FAFSA.

□ A handful of colleges are providing estimated financial aid offers based on data from the CSS Profile form or the college's own financial aid form. These aid offers may change. Most colleges will not send out aid offers until they receive the FAFSA data.

Problems with No Current Solutions

□ If you are an eligible noncitizen and have an A-Number that ends in zero, you may encounter an error message. There is currently no known workaround for this problem. Wait until the problem is fixed before submitting your FAFSA.

□ The U.S. Department of Education has published a set of tips, How To Submit the 2024-25 FAFSA Form if Your Contributor Doesn't Have an SSN. Many people have reported that these tips don't actually work.

Questions about Missing Information

Applicants who have been able to submit the FAFSA have remarked that it took a lot less time than last year. They may be nervous about questions they weren't asked and wonder whether something went wrong.

□ For most applicants and contributors, income and tax information is transferred automatically by the IRS Direct Data Exchange. They will not see any questions about income and tax information, other than some untaxed income questions.

□ Questions about housing options have been removed from the FAFSA. The college may ask you about your housing plans, such as whether you intend to live on campus, off-campus in an apartment, or off-campus with family.

□ Parents who have multiple children in college may have to answer most questions only once, for the first child.

□ Income and tax information for the 2024-25 FAFSA is based on the 2022 tax year. If your income has decreased, whether due to a pay cut, job loss, or a one-time event (e.g., a big bonus in 2022 that won't be repeated), contact the college financial aid office to ask about how to submit a financial aid appeal.

□ There no longer is a signature page to print, sign and mail. Instead, all contributors must sign the FAFSA after logging in with their FSA ID by checking a box on the submission page.

Why Is the FAFSA Asking for Income Information?

□ Some contributors are unable to use the IRS Direct Data Exchange and will be asked to enter income and tax information manually.

□ When a parent is divorced or separated now, and doesn't live with their ex-spouse, but filed as Married Filing Jointly during the prior-prior year (e.g., 2022 for the 2024-25 FAFSA), the FAFSA is not currently able to separate the parent's income from the joint return.

□ Contributors who file a foreign income tax return may be asked to provide income and tax information using the exchange rates in effect on the date the FAFSA is filed. These exchange rates can be found on FederalReserve.gov.

Miscellaneous Questions

□ The FAFSA question about Free and Reduced Price School Lunch applies only to applicants who satisfy the USDA income criteria (income less than 185% of the poverty line). Checking this box if you don't satisfy the income criteria may cause your FAFSA to be selected for verification.

More Resources

Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC): 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

See the Quick Reference Guide on Creating and Using an FSA ID for additional FSA ID tips.

The U.S. Department of Education has published a set of known issues with the 2024-25 FAFSA on the 2024–25 FAFSA Issue Alerts page. As of early March 2024, there are 21 total issues listed on this page, with 16 open issues and 6 resolved issues.

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