



Avoiding Common FAFSA Errors

The chart below lists the most common errors many students, including homeless students and students coming out of foster care, make when completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). These errors stop the processing of the application and delay the disbursement of funds students need to pay college expenses. The right-hand column provides suggestions for avoiding these mistakes.

FAFSA Error	Suggestions to Avoid Error
<p>The student does not sign the application.</p>	<p>The best way to sign the FAFSA on the Web (FOTW) is electronically using an FSA PIN. Encourage students to request their FSA PINs at www.pin.ed.gov before they complete the FAFSA. This way, they can sign the application before they submit it.</p> <p>If a student has already requested an FSA PIN but cannot remember it, they can request a duplicate at the above website.</p> <p><i>NOTE: If the student is accompanied (still in the custody of at least one parent), the parent also needs to sign the FAFSA. Parents can sign the application electronically using an FSA PIN, which they can request from the above website.</i></p> <p>If the student (or parent, if applicable) does not want to sign the FAFSA electronically, he or she can print out the signature page, sign it, and mail it to the address on the page. The student's FAFSA will be processed once the signature page is received.</p>
<p>The name the student reports on the FAFSA does not match the name in the Social Security Administration's records.</p>	<p>Encourage students to locate their Social Security cards before they begin the FAFSA so they can refer to their cards as they complete the application.</p> <p>If a student cannot locate his or her card, information about requesting a replacement card is available at http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber/.</p> <p>Remind students to report their legal name on the FAFSA, and not to use nicknames, abbreviations or to use their middle name as their first name.</p>
<p>The student reports an adjusted gross income (AGI) equal to the amount of income tax.</p>	<p>Only students who are required to file a tax return need to report AGI and income tax on the FAFSA. If the student is not required to file a tax return, he or she should skip the related questions and answer only the question about income earned from work.</p> <p>AGI should not be the same amount as income tax. Students should follow the instructions on the FAFSA about where to find their AGI and income tax on their return. For example, on the 1040EZ AGI is on Line 4 and income tax is on Line 10.</p> <p>Students who are required to file a tax return but who have not yet filed can file the FAFSA using estimated information. A good way to estimate AGI is to add together wages reported on all W-2 forms. Students can estimate their income tax by adding the amounts of federal income tax withheld reported on all W-2 forms. Once students have filed their tax return, they should submit corrections to update the estimated information. Students can submit corrections at www.fafsa.gov.</p> <p>If students have questions about completing this part of the FAFSA, they can call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1.800.433.3243.</p>