

Who Is My “Parent” When I Fill Out the FAFSA® Form?

Which parent’s information should I report on the FAFSA® form?

Dependent students must report information about one or both parents on the form. Below are some guidelines that should help determine whose information to use. Unless otherwise noted, “parent” means your legal (biological and/or adoptive) parent or your stepparent. The following people are **not** your parents unless they have legally adopted you: grandparents, foster parents, legal guardians, older brothers or sisters, uncles or aunts, and widowed stepparents. If you do not live with either parent, skip to the bottom of this page. Also note that how your family files taxes does not determine your dependency on the FAFSA®.

Your Living Arrangements	Parent Marital Status	Whose Information to Report
Both parents are legally married to each other	Married or remarried	Both Parents
You live with both parents, but they are separated (not divorced)		
You live with both parents, but they are not married OR You live with both parents who are divorced and live together	Unmarried and both legal parents living together	
If your parent is widowed (spouse died) and did not remarry	Widowed	That Parent
You live with one parent who never married	Never married	
If parents are divorced or separated and don’t live together	Divorced or separated	The parent with whom you lived more during the past 12 months. If equal, the parent who provided more financial support over the last 12 months
If parents are divorced or separated AND the parent you live with most is currently remarried	Married or remarried	Both parent and stepparent
You are legally adopted by one or both parents	Legal marital status of parent(s)	The person(s) who adopted you

EXCEPTION: The FAFSA form asks about your parents’ education level. For these two questions, your parents are considered to be your birth or adoptive parents—your stepparent is not your parent in those questions.

What if I don’t live with my parents?

You still must answer the questions about them if you’re considered a dependent student. If you are considered an independent student, you may not need parent information. Federal Student Aid only grants independent status if a high school student is: 1) currently married, 2) both parents are deceased, 3) in foster care or a ward of the court at any time since age thirteen, 5) an emancipated minor, 6) in a court-ordered legal guardianship by someone other than a stepparent, 7) homeless with determination from appropriate agency, or 8) providing more than half of a child’s or another dependent’s financial support during the award year.

What if I have no contact with my parents?

If you don’t know where your parents live, or you’ve left home due to an abusive situation, fill out the FAFSA form and then immediately get in touch with the financial aid office at the college or career school you plan to attend. The financial aid administrator will tell you what to do next. Contact the financial aid office as soon as possible so you don’t miss any financial aid deadlines.

For more information, visit [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) or call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

