

# UNDERSTANDING FAFSA VERIFICATION

3 out of 10 people who submit a FAFSA\* are selected for verification by the U.S. Department of Education. If this happens to you, don't worry – this is pretty normal! But it does mean you need to do some additional work to get your financial aid.

## What is verification?

Verification means the financial aid offices at the colleges where you have applied are required to confirm the information you provided on your FAFSA is accurate. Some colleges choose to do institutional verification for all applicants, not just the ones selected by the U.S. Department of Education.

## Who gets selected for verification?

Verification can be random, but you are more likely to be selected for verification if your FAFSA includes incomplete data or data that contradicts itself. Students with a low Expected Family Contribution (EFC) are also more likely to be selected for verification.

**Be prepared.** If you expect you might be selected for verification, locate copies of your and your parents' tax returns from the previous year. Some colleges may request tax transcripts instead. Order them at [irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript](https://irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript) at the same time as you complete your FAFSA.

## How can I reduce my chances of being selected for verification?

- If the FAFSA skip logic allows you to skip questions, skip them.
- Use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool if you're able.
- Double check that you have entered everything correctly before submitting.

## How do I know if I'm selected for verification?

Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) 3-5 days after submitting the FAFSA. Look for an asterisk (\*) next to your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). This means you have been selected for federal verification, so you know you'll need to complete additional forms for every college you've applied to.

**Remember**, this will only tell you if you have been selected for verification by the U.S. Department of Education. You can still be selected by individual colleges for institutional verification.

## What do I need to do if I'm selected for verification?

Each financial aid office will send you additional forms to complete. Colleges create their own forms, so they will not all look the same. You must complete all the forms or you will not be eligible for financial aid.

**Never ignore requests for verification.** If you are selected for verification, you must complete the process to be eligible for financial aid.

*\*If you submitted the ORSAA, there is no formal verification process. However, you could be selected for institutional verification, meaning some colleges might require confirmation of your financial information and ask you to provide documents or complete other requirements in order to process your financial aid. Use this handout to help you prepare.*

## What information will I need to provide?

Colleges may ask you to provide additional information about any of the following: tax information, number of people in your household (and how many of them are in college), or your high school completion status. They might also ask you to provide a statement of your educational purpose.

## How can I stay organized during the verification process?

- **Make a checklist of all the colleges you've applied to** so you can track when they send you forms and when you return them.
- **Be on the lookout for verification forms from all of your colleges.** Colleges may send them to you in different ways: mail, e-mail, college portals, etc.
- **Gather the documents you might need and keep them in one place.** This might include tax returns, tax transcripts, or a non-filers statement for you or you financial aid parent.
- **Follow up.** Contact the financial aid office at the colleges to confirm they received your verification forms. If you haven't received your financial aid offer 2-3 weeks after you expect it to arrive, contact the college. They might be waiting for verification forms.

COLLEGE	DATE FORMS RECEIVED	INFORMATION TO SEND	HOW TO SEND IT	DATE FORMS SENT	CONFIRMED
Example College	12/1/2019	Example College form, 2018 tax return	College web portal	1/15/2020	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>

## More questions?

Contact the financial aid office at the college(s) or visit the Federal Student Aid website at [studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/review-and-correct#verification](http://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/review-and-correct#verification).