

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

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

If you’re considered a dependent student for the purposes of the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form, you’ll need to report information about your parents on the form. But what if your parents are divorced? Remarried? What if you live with someone other than my parents? What if the person that you consider as your parent is not your biological parent? Whose information should you report?

Below are some guidelines that might help. Unless otherwise noted, “parent” means your legal (biological and/or adoptive) parent or your stepparent. In addition, the rules below apply to your legal parents regardless of their gender.

- If your parents are living and legally married to each other, answer the questions about both of them.
- If your parents are living together and are not married, answer the questions about both of them.
- If your parent is widowed or was never married, answer the questions about that parent.
- If your parents are divorced or separated and don’t live together, answer the questions about the parent with whom you lived more during the past 12 months. If you lived the same amount of time with each parent, give answers about the parent who provided more financial support during the past 12 months or during the most recent year that you actually received support from a parent.
- If your parents are divorced but live together, you’ll indicate their marital status as “Unmarried and both legal parents living together,” and you’ll answer the questions about both of them.
- If your parents are separated but live together, you’ll indicate their marital status as “Married or remarried,” and you’ll answer the questions about both of them.
- If you have a stepparent who is married to the legal parent whose information you’re reporting, you must provide information about that stepparent as well.

**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.

**NOTE:** 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.

## ***What if my parents are worried about providing their private information on the FAFSA® form?***

Their information is safe with us. We recommend you fill out your FAFSA online, where your information is put into special code before it's sent over the Internet to our processor. Also, we won't share your FAFSA information with anyone except the schools you tell us you want to attend (so they can use the information to offer financial aid to you) and a few federal and state government agencies (so they can check to be sure you've reported your information accurately or can assess your information to see what financial aid they could offer you).

## ***What if I don't live with my parents?***

You still must answer the questions about them if you're considered a dependent student.

## ***What if my parents aren't going to help me pay for college and refuse to provide information for my FAFSA® form?***

You can't be considered independent of your parents just because they refuse to help you with this process. If you don't provide their information on the FAFSA form, it will be considered "rejected," and you might not be able to receive any federal student aid. The most you would be able to get (depending on what the financial aid administrator at your college decides) would be an unsubsidized loan.

The FAFSA form will tell you what to do if you're in this situation. You also will need to speak to the financial aid administrator at the college or career school you plan to attend.

## ***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 on federal student aid, visit [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) or call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).