

## Q&A: Who is my “parent” when I fill out the FAFSA?

**Q:** Which parent’s information should I report on the FAFSA?

**A:** Maybe you know you are considered a dependent student\* by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and you are required to include information about your parents on the application. But what if your parents are divorced? Remarried? What if you live with your sister? Whose information should you report? Below are some guidelines that might help. Unless otherwise noted, “parent” means your legal (biological and/or adoptive) parent and stepparent, if parent is remarried. 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 do not 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 will indicate their marital status as “Unmarried and both parents living together,” and you will answer the questions about both of them.
- If your parents are separated but live together, you will indicate their marital status as “Married or remarried,” and you will answer the questions about both of them.
- If you have a stepparent who is married to the legal parent whose information you are reporting, you must provide information about that stepparent as well.
- The following people are not your parents unless they have adopted you: grandparents, foster parents, legal guardians, older brothers or sisters, and uncles or aunts.

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

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

**A:** You still must answer the questions about them if you are considered a dependent student.

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

**A:** You cannot be considered independent of your parents just because they refuse to help you with this process. If you do not provide their information on the FAFSA, this may affect your eligibility for federal aid. The online help will assist you with completing and submitting the form if you are in this situation. You also will need to speak to the financial aid administrator at the college or career school you plan to attend. Contact the financial aid office as soon as possible to allow plenty of time for assistance with your financial aid options.

**Q:** What if I have no contact with my parents?

**A:** If you do not know where your parents live, or you have left home due to an abusive situation, fill out the FAFSA 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. Do not put this off or you might miss financial aid deadlines! \*Find out whether you are a dependent student: see page 24 or "Am I Dependent or Independent?" at [studentaid.gov/resources](http://studentaid.gov/resources).