

# FAFSA | Family Size and Number in College

There are a number of significant updates that are part of the major redesign of the 2024–25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Two of those changes are adding a new term, “family size,” and the application no longer considers the number of family members in college.

## What is “family size”?

Family size replaces the term “household size” on the FAFSA form. It captures the appropriate number of family members and dependents in the applicant’s household. For tax-filers, family size will be automatically calculated based on the number of individuals claimed as exemptions on the tax return.

## What if I need to change family size on the FAFSA?

If the family size is different from what is reported on the tax return, there will be an option to enter it manually.

### Family Size Criteria for Dependent Filers

- Student
- Parent (and spouse)
- Parent’s dependent children, even if they live apart from the parent because of college enrollment\*
- Other people if they live with the parent\*

### Family Size Criteria for Independent Filers

- Student (and spouse)
- Student’s dependent children, even if they live apart from the student because of college enrollment
- Other people if they live with the student\*

\* Included only if providing more than half of their support between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025

## Number in College

The new Student Aid Index (SAI) calculation will no longer take into consideration the number of family members in college as a factor in determining federal financial aid eligibility.

## What do these changes mean for students completing the FAFSA?

If an independent student or parent of a dependent student FAFSA contributor is a tax-filer, family size will be auto-matically calculated based on the number of people claimed as an exemption on tax forms. Previously, household size was reported by the student applicant on the FAFSA. Contributors will have an option to report family size manually if it is different from what is on the tax return.

**TIP:** Have a copy of the tax return or tax transcript handy when completing the FAFSA to check who was claimed.

Eligibility for Pell Grants is now linked to family size and the federal poverty level.

The FAFSA still includes a question about the number of dependents in college that is required to be answered, even though it will no longer be included in the formula for calculating the indicator of federal financial aid eligibility. This information may be used for institutional purposes.