Five things you can do while you wait for the 2025-26 FAFSA

Normally, the FAFSA is released on October 1 for the following academic year, but this year the 2025-26 FAFSA won't be available until December. That means that anyone who plans to apply for financial aid for the 2025-26 academic year has some extra time on their hands. So, what should you do? Here are five things you can be doing to get ready for college while you wait for the FAFSA to be available:

1

Create your FSA ID at StudentAid.gov.
Your FSA ID is your username and password for your StudentAid.gov account. You and anyone contributing to your FAFSA (like a parent or spouse) will need an FSA ID.

2

Gather the information you will need to complete the FAFSA.
You and anyone contributing to your FAFSA will need 2023 income tax returns, records of investments and assets, Social Security numbers, child support amount received (if applicable), and the amounts in cash, checking and savings.

3

Research colleges.
One of the keys to succeeding in college is to find the right fit. Think about your ideal college environment and use the College Scorecard to learn about the institution, such as the fields of study offered, the average cost of attendance, the size of the institution, and admissions and graduation rates among other factors.

4

Apply for admission to college.
Once you've created a list of potential colleges, complete your applications for admission. Remember, many colleges charge a fee with the admission application, but some states offer a free application period if you are applying to a public institution. If you have financial need, some institutions provide a fee waiver.

Apply Now!

5

Research and apply for scholarships.
One of the best ways you can spend your time as you await the FAFSA is to research and apply for scholarships. Scholarship searches and applications do take time, but every scholarship received helps reduce the cost of your education and may prevent you from having to take on student loan debt.