

## How do you become an independent student?

Just because a student is paying for all of his own expenses doesn't make him an independent student for financial aid purposes. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has very specific requirements to qualify as an independent student.

Students must answer "yes" to one or more of the [following questions](#) to become an independent student. (The dates change each year.)

Were you born before Jan. 1, 1992?	Yes	No
As of today, are you married? (Also answer "Yes" if you are separated but not divorced.)	Yes	No
At the beginning of the 2015–16 school year, will you be working on a master's or doctorate program (such as an M.A., M.B.A., M.D., J.D., Ph.D., Ed.D., graduate certificate, etc.)?	Yes	No
Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. armed forces for purposes other than training? (If you are a National Guard or Reserves enlistee, are you on active duty for other than state or training purposes?)	Yes	No
Are you a veteran of the U.S. armed forces?	Yes	No
Do you now have—or will you have—children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2015, and June 30, 2016?	Yes	No
Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now and through June 30, 2016?	Yes	No
At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care, or were you a dependent or ward of the court?	Yes	No
Has it been determined by a court in your state of legal residence that you are an emancipated minor or that you are in a legal guardianship?	Yes	No
At any time on or after July 1, 2014, were you determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless, as determined by (a) your high school or district homeless liaison, (b) the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or (c) the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program?	Yes	No

As you can see, simply living on your own and working a job instead of going to college will not qualify someone as an independent student. Even if the parents don't claim the student on their taxes, students will still have to report your parent's income as part of the FAFSA application.

It may be possible for students to [change their status](#). Students will have to contact the financial aid office of the school they plan to attend which will make the decision about dependency status. The school's decision is final and cannot be appealed to the U.S. Department of Education.

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