Quick Tips
From FAME for the FAFSA

1. **The College Goal Maine Web site will direct you to official FAFSA Web site** www.fafsa.gov.

2. **How do I access help if I have a question?**

   a. FAME Customer Service is available to answer your FAFSA filing questions Monday- Friday, 8am-5pm. You can contact them at 1-800-228-3734. You can also email a question to education@famemaine.com. Emails will be answered during business hours.

   b. **There is also help at fafsa.gov**. Look for the help buttons located on each page:

   - This button is located at the top of each page. It will redirect you to a list of searchable questions as well as information on accessing a FAFSA specialist via live online chat, toll free number, or email. **FAFSA's toll free number is 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).**

   - This button is found at the bottom of each page and explains how to access helps for the page you are on.

   Access help and hints in the right hand column while in the FAFSA:
   - For questions that have an answer box, place your cursor in the box.

   - For questions with radio buttons, place your cursor over one of the two options.

   - For questions that have a drop-down option, place your cursor on the drop down-box.

3. **How do I move through the FAFSA?**

   - Use the previous and next PREVIOUS NEXT buttons on the bottom of your FAFSA. Do **NOT** use browser's back and forward arrows at the top left of your screen.

   - Use your "tab" key to move from one question to the next or your mouse to left click into an answer field. Do **NOT** use your "enter" key.

4. **What is the difference between my PIN and my password?** Your PIN (Personal Identification Number) is your electronic signature. The PIN allows you to sign and submit your FAFSA electronically. Your PIN does not change and may be used in future years. Your password is a temporary feature that allows you to go back to work on a saved FAFSA that you have not yet submitted.

5. **Can I save what I have and come back later?** Yes. You will use your password to get back into your saved FAFSA.

6. **What is the best way to estimate my income and my tax information?** Many people use income tax forms from the previous year. This is a good method if your income has not changed much. The best way to estimate is to use your W-2 form(s) and the current income tax form to do a quick estimate. Remember,

your tax "estimate" is the amount that your taxes will be based on your estimated adjusted gross income, not the amount that was withheld.

7. **What do I list for income information if I don't file taxes?** Use your W-2 to list income earned from work. If you don't work, see below.

8. **The FAFSA includes a section for you to report your untaxed income.** Do not include student aid, welfare payments (TANF), Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Workforce Investment Act educational benefits, earned income, additional child tax credits, military housing or military housing allowance, combat pay, flexible spending arrangement benefits, foreign income exclusion, or credit for federal tax on special fuels.

9. **For the "number in school" question, should I include my siblings if they are in school but do not live at home?** Include siblings who are counted in the FAFSA "household" question and who are enrolled at least half-time in a degree or certificate program. Do NOT include your parents, even if they are enrolled in school.

10. **If you are a dependent student who must include parental information on the FAFSA, the following will help you determine which parent(s) you must include information for:**

    a. **If your parents are married to each other**, include information for both.

    b. **If your parents are divorced or separated**, include information for the parent that you live with most during the last 12 months. If that parent has remarried, also include your stepparent.

    c. **If you do not live with one parent more than the other**, include information for the parent that provides the most financial support. If that parent has remarried, also include your stepparent.

    d. **If you do not live with your parents, you must still include parent information.** To determine which parent, use the guidelines above, going back to the most recent 12 month period in which you lived with a parent or they provided financial support to you.

11. **What are considered assets and what are not?**

    a. Assets that must be reported include your current total balance of cash, savings, and checking accounts, college investing accounts, net worth of investments, real estate such as rental property, land, and summer homes.

    b. Assets that are **not** reported include the home you live in your family farm or family business with 100 or fewer employees, personal possessions, pensions and whole life insurance, and retirement accounts.

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✓ Your FAFSA will be processed in 3-5 days. If you provided a valid email address, an email will be sent notifying you that your FAFSA has been processed and will include a link to your Student Aid Report (SAR). **Review your SAR carefully** to check for errors.

✓ **The Federal Processing Center will send your information to the colleges** that you listed on your FAFSA, including future updates and corrections you make to your FAFSA.

✓ **To make corrections or updates, go to www.fafsa.gov** and *"Login"* under *"Returning User"*. You will need your name, SSN, and DOB. Click on *"Make FAFSA Corrections"*, enter your PIN, create a password, and add or correct any required information. Once complete, sign using your PIN, and submit your FAFSA.

✓ **You can always check your FAFSA status or access your SAR by logging into www.fafsa.gov**. To access your SAR, click on "View Processed Information" (pop-ups must be enabled in your browser). You can also call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at *1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)* with questions.

✓ Your school(s) may ask you to verify the accuracy of the information you provide on your FAFSA.

YOU MUST update your FAFSA after you have filed your 2012 income taxes
(If you are filing your FAFSA before filing your income taxes)

1. **File your federal tax return as soon as possible**, and if you can, file electronically. This will allow you to update your FAFSA information sooner and enable colleges to provide financial aid awards earlier.

2. **Use the IRS Data Retrieval tool to update income and tax information on your FAFSA.** The IRS Data Retrieval tool allows FAFSA *applicants and parents* to retrieve their tax data directly from the IRS and transfer the data to the FAFSA. A limited number of people cannot use this tool. IRS data will become available for retrieval after about two weeks if you file electronically or after six weeks if you file by mail. You will get to the IRS Data Retrieval tool by following the steps below.

3. **To update income information on your FAFSA**, go to your FAFSA at www.fafsa.gov and *"Login"* under *"Returning User"*. You will need your name, SSN, and DOB. Once logged in:

   a. Click on *"Make FAFSA Corrections"*.
   b. Enter your PIN and create a password.
   c. Go to the "*Financial Information"* section.
   d. Under the "Have you completed your IRS income tax return?" question, *change the response from "will file" to "already completed". U*pon changing the response, new fields will appear.
   e. This is where you will use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, provide the necessary information to link to the IRS, and transfer the required information from your tax return to your FAFSA.
   f. Complete this process for both the student and parent, if appropriate.
   g. Once complete, sign using the required PINS, and **submit your updated (not estimated) FAFSA**.

   If you have difficulty retrieving your tax return, it may be a formatting issue. To retrieve your return, the address you provide must exactly match what the IRS has. To see the IRS format of your address, go to usps.gov and click on *"Look up a Zip Code"* - enter your address and you will see how the IRS formatted your address.

   If you are not able to use the IRS Data Retrieval tool, request an IRS Tax Transcript at:
   http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Order-a-Transcript .