



College Money Method's Guide to CSS Profile for Dependent Students

The Guide is written for parents to:

- ✓ step you through key sections of the 2026-27 CSS Profile,
- ✓ clearly explain how to report information for questions and
- ✓ provide you with tips on what to consider when you are reporting.

Who is the Guide for?

The Guide is developed for families with U.S. students who are considered a dependent of a parent or parents.

Which colleges require the CSS Profile?

You can look up whether colleges on your list require it on the [CSS Profile website](#). However, it's important to verify requirements directly on the colleges' financial aid websites.

How do I use the Guide?

The Guide focuses on the sections that ask detailed questions about financial information that many families find difficult to fill out.

The Guide follows the same order as the CSS Profile, so you can use it as you are working on completing your application.

You may not have to enter info in every section. The table of contents on the next page provides direct links to each section of the Guide.

NOTE: Under the areas "How to Report Answers" and "Tips & Strategies," you and your refers to the parent, not the student. Student refers to the applicant.



Table of Contents

Sections	Pages
Section: Parent Income	
Parent Income Intro	3
Parent U.S. Tax Return (1040)	4
Parent Schedule 1 & Parent Other Forms	5
Parent Income and Benefits Details – Parent Earnings & Contributions	6
Parent Income and Benefits Details – Parent Income and Benefits	7
Parent Other Year's Income and Benefits	8
Section: Parent Employment	9
Section: Housing information	
Parent Housing Details (<i>Homeowners</i>)	10
Section: Household Summary	
Dependent Education Expenses	11-12
Section: Child Support	13
Section: Parent Expenses	
Parent Medical Expenses	14
Parent Expenses Detail – Educational Loans	15
Section: Parent Assets	
Parent Assets Details	16-17
Parent Other Real Estate Details	18
Parent Business Details	19-20
Section: Student Income	
Student Non-filer	21
Student Expected Income and Benefits	22
Student Resources	23
Section: Student Assets	
Student Asset Details	24
Section: Special Circumstances	25

Section: Parent Income Intro

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

Did Student's parents file a federal tax return for 2024? (required)

What type of tax return did Student's parents file or will file for 2024?

What is Student's parents' tax filing status for 2024?

What amount is listed on Line 11: Adjusted gross income from Student's parents' 1040? (required)

Did Student's parents file a 1040 Schedule 1 - Additional Income and Adjustments to Income?

Did Paul's parents file any of the following for 2024? Check all that apply: 1040 Schedule 3 - Additional Credits and Payments



How to Report Answers

Choose "Completed," "Estimated, will file," or "Not filed, and not require to file, a tax return." This question about "a federal return" applies to federal returns from any country, not just the U.S.

Choose: "U.S. tax return (1040)", "Canadian tax return," "U.S. Territory return," or "Other non-U.S. tax return."

Choose: "Married, filing joint return," "Head of Household," "Single," "Married, filing separate returns," or "Qualifying surviving spouse."
Note: This screen only shows up if you choose "U.S. tax return (1040)" in the previous screen.

Enter the amount in Line 11 on the first page of your 1040.

Choose: Yes or No. This will determine whether you need to answer additional questions from Schedule 1.

Check if you filed a Schedule 3.



Tips & Strategies

- **What if one parent files a U.S. tax return, but the other does not file a U.S. tax return?**
If at least one parent files a U.S. tax return (1040), then choose "U.S. tax return (1040)" for the type of return and then select "Married, filing separate returns" for the question "What is Student's parents' tax filing status for 2024?" The other parent's foreign tax return will have to be converted to U.S. dollars, and entries will have to be made with equivalent fields from their tax forms.
- **If you are separated or divorced, be careful about how you answer the question, "What is Student's parents' tax filing status for 2024?"**
The hint box on this screen is very confusing, stating "choose 'Married, filing separate returns, even if they were not married...". You should actually enter the filing status checked at the top of your 2024 tax return. Most separated or divorced parents file either a "Single" or "Head of Household" return, which is the correct selection.
- **What if a parent's foreign tax return is not on the U.S. 2024 tax year (Jan 1 – Dec 31, 2024)?**
If the country's tax year does not follow the U.S. tax year, report information from the last tax year that ended before April 1, 2025. For example, if the tax year runs from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, enter the information for the year ending March 31, 2025. If the tax year runs from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, enter the information for the tax year that ended June 30, 2024.
- **How to qualify for the fee waiver?**
If you enter an Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) from Line 11 below \$100,000, you will be notified that you are eligible for the CSS Profile fee waiver and can submit the application for free. Other ways to qualify include: 1. if the student has already qualified for the SAT fee waiver or 2. if the student is an orphan or ward of the court and under 24 years old.

Section: Parent U.S. Tax Return (1040)

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

Enter the following from Student's parents' 2024 1040 using the tax line references.

- Line 1z: Wages, salaries, tips, etc. (required)
- Line 2a: Tax-exempt interest
- Line 2b: Taxable interest
- Line 3b: Ordinary dividends
- Line 4a: IRA distributions
 - Amount of rollover, if any
- Line 4b: IRAs, taxable amount
- Line 5a: Pensions and annuities
 - Amount of rollover, if any
- Line 5b: Pensions and annuities, taxable amount
- Line 6a: Social security benefits
- Line 6b: Social security benefits, taxable amount
- Line 7: Capital gain or (loss)
- Line 10: Adjustments to income
- Line 12: Standard deduction or itemized deductions
- Line 13: Qualified business income deduction
- Line 22: Federal taxes paid (required)



How to Report Answers

Enter amounts for all lines that you reported on your 1040 tax return.

Leave blank any lines that you have not reported or you reported as 0 on your tax return.

Required entries are:

- Line 1z: Wages, salaries, tips, etc.
- Line 22: Federal taxes paid

If you have no values for Line 1z or 22, enter 0.



Tips & Strategies

- **Did you rollover an IRA in 2024?**
If you did, be sure to enter the amount of that rollover in the question under Line 4a, "Amount of rollover, if any." This information is not reported on your tax form. If you don't report the rollover amount, it will be counted as a distribution added to your income for 2024.
- **Did you rollover a pension or annuity in 2024?**
If you did, be sure to enter the amount of that rollover in the question under Line 5a, "Amount of rollover, if any." This information is not reported on your tax form. If you don't report the rollover amount, it will be counted as a distribution added to your income for 2024.
- **For Federal taxes paid, why is the application asking for Line 22 and not Line 24 (total tax)?**
Line 24 includes self-employment tax paid by business owners. CSS Profile builds an allowance for self-employment tax into their calculation.

Section: Parent Schedule 1 & Parent Other Forms

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

Enter the following information from Student's parents' 2024 1040 Schedule 1 using the tax line references.

- Line 1: Taxable refunds, credits, or offsets of state and local income taxes
- Line 2a: Alimony received
- Line 3: Business income or (loss)
- Line 4: Other gains or (losses)
- Line 5: Rental real estate, royalties, partnerships, S corporations, trusts, etc.
- Line 6: Farm income or (loss)
- Line 7: Unemployment compensation
- Line 8d: Foreign earned income exclusion (required)
- Line 9: Total other income
- Line 13: Health savings account deduction
- Line 16: Self-employed SEP, SIMPLE, and qualified plans
- Line 19a: Alimony paid
- Line 20: IRA deduction

Use the schedules or forms Student's parents filed with their U.S. tax return in 2024 to answer the following:

- Schedule 3, line 3: Education credits



How to Report Answers

These sections will only appear on your application if you have selected "1040 Schedule 1" on the earlier screen.

You can leave blank any lines with no values, amounts, or zeros on your tax returns, except for Line 8d which would require an entry of "0" if blank.

For Lines 3, 4 & 6, if you have a loss, enter a negative number with the "-" sign.



Tips & Strategies

- How do I know if I need to report Schedules 1 or 3?

If you have a pdf or printout of your tax return from a tax preparer or tax preparation software, check if these schedules and forms are included after your 1040 signature page.

Schedule 1 is common for families to file if you report items such as taxable refunds of state income tax and business income. Schedule 1 is filed if even only one of the items on the form Schedule 1 is required. It's probable that many of these entries will be blank.

Section: Parent Income and Benefits Details

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Parent Earnings

How much did Parent earn from work in 2024? (required)

Enter wages, tips, and other compensation reported in Box 1 of your W-2 forms or other earning statements and any earnings from work not included on earnings statements, including those found in Schedule C for business owners

Parent Contributions

Enter the amount Student's parents contributed in 2024 to the following:

Tax deferred pension and retirement savings plan (required)

Add up pre-tax contributions to your pension, 401k, or 403b. Only include payments you made from your salary, not the employer match amount. See below.

A health savings account (HSA) (required)

Enter pre-tax contributions you made to your HSA.



Tips & Strategies

- If parents are married, report earnings from work separately for each parent. However, when reporting contributions to retirement plans or HSA, report the combined number for both parents.
- Where do you find retirement contributions for "Tax deferred pension and retirement savings plan"? You can find these amounts on your 2024 W-2 Forms in boxes 12a through 12d, codes D, E, F, G, H, and S. Be careful not to include amounts reported as codes C, AA, BB, CC, DD, or EE.
- Only report your pre-tax contributions to your retirement account from your income. Do not report contributions made by your employer if your employer provides a match.
- Be careful. Don't include all retirement contributions in 2024 for "Tax deferred pension and retirement savings plan." Only include your pre-tax contributions to your employer-sponsored plans, found on your W-2. Any contributions you made to an IRA, SEP, and SIMPLE are already captured in the Parent Schedule 1 section of the application.
- Where do you find your HSA contributions? You can usually find these contributions on your 2024 W-2 Forms, box 12, code W.

If you personally contribute to an HSA account outside your payroll, do not report that amount here. It is already reported in the "Parent Schedule 1" section of the application.

Section: Parent Income and Benefits Details

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

For the next few sections, enter the total amounts Student's parents received in 2024 for the following:



How to Report Answers

Social Security benefits received in 2024 for dependents not enrolled in college for 2026-27.

Enter untaxed 2024 Social Security benefits for members of the household who are not in college in 2026-27, typically found on the 1099-SSA, Box 5.

Housing, food, and other living allowances received in 2024 as members of the clergy or other profession (required)

Enter cash payments or the cash value of benefits received in 2024.

Other untaxed income in 2024 (including, but not limited to Workers' Compensation, untaxed disability benefits, and income from other family members). (required)

Enter other untaxed income benefits in 2024. Refer to the hint box on the application for an extended list of untaxed benefits.

Alimony Received in 2024 (including, but not limited to, amounts reported on a tax return) (required)

Enter the total amount of all alimony payments received for 2024.



Tips & Strategies

- **What do you need to report for your housing, food, and other living allowances?**
Report amounts not included as part of wages, earnings, or compensation from your employer. Be careful not to include amounts reported elsewhere on this application, particularly if these benefits are reported on your W-2 and taxed as part of your compensation.
If you are in the military, do not include the value of on-base military housing or the value of a basic military allowance for housing.
- **What qualifies as "other household members" for the question "Other untaxed income in 2024"?**
These individuals live in the same home, are not considered dependent, and provide money for living expenses or paying bills.
This would not include students, spouses, or grandparents living in the home and being supported by the parents.
- **Be careful with the question "Other untaxed income."**
Do not include:
 - ✗ Income reported elsewhere on this application, such as child support received.
 - ✗ Money from student financial aid.
 - ✗ Educational Workforce Investment Act benefits.
 - ✗ Veteran's educational benefits.
 - ✗ Combat pay.

Section: Parent Other Years' Income and Benefits

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Parent 2025 Income and Benefits

Enter the amounts Student's parents received or expect to receive in 2025 for the following:

Parent's income from work (required)	Enter your total expected 2025 income from work, including wages, salaries, and other compensation.
Other taxable income (required)	Enter the total amount of other taxable income, including interest and dividend income you expect to report on your 2025 income tax return.
Untaxed income and benefits (required)	Enter the untaxed income you will receive in 2025.
What are the source(s) of this untaxed income?	Detail the sources of the untaxed income. See examples below.
Expect Change	
Do Student's parents expect a significant income change in 2026 due to a new job, a job loss, retirement, benefit changes, etc.? (required)	Choose Yes or No. If you answer "Yes," you will be asked to answer Questions #1-3 on this page for expected or estimated amounts for 2026 as well.



Tips & Strategies

- Did you have a change in income from 2024 to 2025?
If yes, this is an especially important section for you to report your current financial situation that is not reflected in your 2024 income tax returns. Take the time to calculate your revised income for 2025 accurately.
- How do you report "Untaxed income and benefits" for 2025?
Add 2025 amounts for:
 - Pre-tax retirement contributions (IRA/Keogh accounts, 401k, 403b, 457, etc.).
 - Untaxed distributions from pensions or retirement accounts.
 - Untaxed Social Security benefits for all family members except college students.
 - Child support received.
 - Contributions to HSA.
 - Housing allowance benefits for military, clergy, and others.
 - Veteran's non-educational benefits.
 - Worker's Compensation.
 - Any other untaxed income and benefits.

Section: Parent Employment

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Employment

What is Parent's employment status? (required)

Choose: "Employed by others," "Self-employed," "Unemployed," or "Retired or not employed by choice."

Has Parent ever been in the U.S. Armed Forces? (required)

Choose: Yes or No.

What is Parent's occupation?

Describe your primary occupation. If unemployed or retired, list your occupation when you were employed.

Where does Parent work?

Enter the name of your employer or business.

How many years has Parent worked here?

Enter # of years at your current employer or business. If less than one, enter 1.

Retirement Plans

Which retirement plans does Parent participate in?

Select all the ways you are saving for retirement:

- IRA, Keogh, 401k, 403b, or other tax-deferred plan.
- Plans to draw social security upon retirement.
- Employer-sponsored plan.
- Civil service or state-sponsored plan.
- Union-sponsored plan.
- Military sponsored plan.
- Other type of retirement plans.

Current value of Parent's tax-deferred and after-tax retirement, pension, annuity, and savings plans such as an IRA, Roth IRA, Keogh, SEP, 401(a), 401(k), 403(b), 408, 457, 501(c). (required)

Add up the amounts in your tax-deferred retirement accounts.



Tips & Strategies

- **How do you report the amount of your pension for the "Current value of pension"?**
For defined benefit plans, like pensions, report the net worth from the most recent account statement.
- **Why does this application ask about retirement plans?**
Colleges do not consider money in your retirement accounts as a parent asset available to pay for college. Some colleges consider this information to be part of developing a more complete picture of your financial circumstances.

Section: Parent Housing Details (Own Home)

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Student's and parents permanent address the same.	Choose: Yes or No.
Parent home address	Enter parent home address if different from student's.
Home purchase year (required)	If not purchased, enter the year you took title.
Home purchase price (required)	If not purchased, the value of the home when you took title.
Current market value (required)	Enter the price that would be reasonable to expect if the home were sold today. Do not use assessed, insured, or tax value.
Total amount owed on home (required)	Enter the total debt on the home, including the principal balance or payoff amount on the primary mortgage and any second mortgages, outstanding home equity loans (HELOCs), or other debts against the home.
What is Student's parents' monthly housing payment?	Enter your monthly mortgage payments for principal and interest only. Do not include escrow payments, insurance premiums, association fees, or property taxes.



Tips & Strategies

- Give yourself the opportunity to report the lowest market value for "Current market value."**
 Don't automatically report the default Zillow estimate as your current market value. Zillow isn't the sole decision maker on your home value.
 Shop for different market values and use the one most favorable for you.
 - Research your market value on other websites like Redfin or Realtor.com
 - Use the market value from your property tax statement. While the application explicitly states don't use the *assessed or taxed value*, some property tax statements include the current market value.
 - Ask a realtor to estimate the current value and get it in an email.
- Adjust the lowest online value for property condition, if applicable.**
 The market value of your home depends on multiple factors beyond the comps and recent sales used by online estimates. You can adjust your property value based on additional factors, like necessary repairs or updates.
- Be careful to report only debt borrowed to pay for the property for "Total amount owed on home."**
 Do not include interest due, escrow payments, insurance premiums, association fees, property taxes, personal loans, consumer loans, or other debts.
- How do you accurately calculate your housing payment?**
 Monthly payments to your mortgage company often include escrow for insurance and taxes.
 Look at that monthly statement to get the breakdown and include only the principal and interest payments.
 Don't forget to add your monthly payments to a second mortgage or home equity line of credit (HELOC).

Section: Dependent Education Expenses (K-12)

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

2 SECTIONS:

1) Tell us about educational expenses paid by Sibling parents for 2025-26

2) Tell us about Sibling's school for the upcoming year, 2026-27



How to Report Answers

Answer the same set of questions for both sections but with the appropriate numbers for each year.

Name of the K-12 school attending	Enter the school name.
Total cost to attend this school	Enter the total cost of attendance for this child. Include tuition, fees, books, school supplies, housing, and meals.
Amount received in scholarships, grants, or gift aid	Enter the gift aid and grants this child received or expects to receive for the academic year from the school.
Total educational expenses paid or expected to be paid by Sibling's parents	Add up the money parents paid or expect to pay towards educational expenses. Include tuition, fees, books, school supplies, housing, and meals
Of the total educational expenses paid or expected to be paid, what amount was tuition?	Enter the amount paid or expect to pay for tuition only.



Tips & Strategies

- These questions are only applicable if your child attends private school.
- If you are divorced or separated, be careful on reporting expenses for the last two questions "Total educational expenses paid or expected to be paid by Sibling's parents" & "Of the total educational expenses paid or expected to be paid, what amount was tuition?"
The questions are worded in a way that asks total expenses paid by both parents. Only enter the amount that you paid or will pay.
Do not include any amount paid by borrowing.
- What can you include in total educational expenses?
Only include tuition, fees, books, supplies, housing, and meals.
Don't include fees for extracurricular activities, like sports, music, or theater.
Do not include any amount paid by borrowing.

Section: Dependent Education Expenses (Post-secondary)

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

2 SECTIONS:

1) Tell us about educational expenses paid by Sibling parents for 2025-26

2) Tell us about Sibling's school for the upcoming year, 2026-27



How to Report Answers

Answer the same set of questions for both sections but with the appropriate numbers for each year.

Will Sibling attend full-time or half-time? (required)	Choose: Full-time or Half0time
Type of college (required)	Choose: 2-year public college, 2-year private college, 4-year public college/university, 4-year private college/university, Graduate/professional school, Proprietary school.
Name of the college or university attending	Enter the school name.
Total cost to attend this school	Enter the total cost of attendance for this child. Include tuition, fees, books and supplies, housing, meals, transportation and personal expenses.
Total educational expenses paid or expected to be paid by Sibling's parents	Add up the money parents paid or expect to pay towards educational expenses. Include amounts paid for tuition, fees, books and supplies, housing, meals, transportation and personal expenses.



Tips & Strategies

- These questions are only applicable if your child goes to a post-secondary institution.
- If you are divorced or separated, be careful on reporting expenses for "Total educational expenses paid or expected to be paid by Sibling's parents."
The questions are worded in a way that asks total expenses paid by both parents. Only enter the amount that you paid or will pay.
Do not include any amount paid by borrowing.
- What if your other child is starting college in 2026-27?
If you don't know which college your other child will attend because they are also applying, you can put unknown for college name and use estimates for the total cost of attendance. Additionally, you should estimate the expenses you expect to pay as a portion of the cost of attendance.

Section: Child Support

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Child Support Received

Did Student's parents receive child support in 2024? (required)

Choose: Yes or No.

How much did Student's parents receive in child support in 2024?
Total amount received for all children(required)

Add monthly payments for all children received in 2024 to enter the annual amount
.

Amount received for Student (required)

Enter just the portion of annual child support received in 2024 for the student applicant.

Child Support Paid

Did Student's parents pay child support in 2024 or 2025? (required)

Choose: Yes or No.

In 2024, how much did Student's parents pay in child support? (required)

Add up monthly payments made in 2024 to enter the annual amount.

In 2025, how much did Student's parents pay in child support? (required)

Add up the total monthly payments that will be made in 2025 to enter the annual amount.



Tips & Strategies

- How do you report "Amount received for Student"?
If your divorce or child-support agreement doesn't state the amount specifically allotted to your student applicant, you can divide the total amount received in 2024 by the number of your children being supported. Enter that result "Amount received for Student".

Section: Parent Expenses – Parent Medical Expenses

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

Does Student's parents have any medical or dental expenses not covered by insurance?

How much in medical and dental expenses, not covered by insurance, did Student's parents pay in 2024?

How much in medical and dental expenses, not covered by insurance, will Student's parents expect to pay in 2025?



How to Report Answers

Choose: Yes or No.

Add up insurance premiums, co-pays, and out-of-pocket expenses for uncovered or unreimbursed medical and dental expenses in 2024.

Add up all current and expected insurance premiums, co-pays, and out-of-pocket expenses for uncovered or unreimbursed medical and dental expenses in 2025.



Tips & Strategies

- **When do you report medical and dental expenses?**

You can report any medical or dental expenses not covered by insurance. However, most colleges will only consider these expenses to impact your available income to pay for college if they exceed 3% of your total income.

Remember to include all out-of-pocket expenses, including premiums (or your portion of premiums), co-pays, and any services, treatments, procedures, or drugs not paid for by your insurance.

If you included medical and dental expenses as an itemized deduction on your 2024 U.S. tax return, enter the amount from Schedule A, line 1.

Section: Parent Expenses Detail – Educational Loans

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

How much did Student's parents repay on college loans in 2024 for:

Student's parents' education

Enter the total amount of loan payments in 2024 for loans taken out for parents' education.

Student's education

Enter the total amount of loan payments in 2024 for all parent loans taken for the student's education.

Student's siblings' education

Enter the total loan payments in 2024 for all parent loans taken for other children's education.

How much did Student's parents pay or expect to pay for college loans in 2025 for:

Student's parents' education

Enter the total amount of loan payments in 2025 for loans taken for parents' education.

Student's education

Enter the total amount of loan payments in 2025 for all parent loans taken for the student's education.

Student's siblings' education

Enter the total loan payments in 2025 for all parent loans taken for other children's education.

Loan Balances

How much is owed for these college loans?

Student's parents' education

Add up all outstanding balances for educational loans taken for parents' education.

Student's education

Add up all outstanding balances for parent loans taken for the student's (applicant's) education.

Student's siblings' education

Add up all outstanding balances for parent loans taken for other children's education.



Tips & Strategies

- **What counts as loans for "Student's parents' education"?**
You should only include loans that you borrowed and are being repaid for your own education, i.e., your student loans.
Do not report loan debt from a home equity loan of credit (HELOC) or other sources, only educational loans.
- **What counts as loans for "Student's education"?**
You should only include parent loans you've borrowed and are repaying for the student applicant's education.
Do not include student loans taken by your student that you have agreed to repay.
Do not report loan debt from a home equity loan of credit (HELOC) or other sources, only educational loans.
- **What counts as loans for "Student's siblings' education"?**
You should only include parent loans you've borrowed and are paying for your other children's education.
Do not include student loans taken by your children that you have agreed to repay.
Do not report loan debt from a home equity loan of credit (HELOC) or other sources, only educational loans.

Section: Parent Assets

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

Current amount in cash, savings, checking, and deposit accounts (required)

Do Student's parents have the following assets?

Investments (required)

Own real estate beyond the primary home, such as land, a vacation or second home, a seasonal or vacation rental property, or rent real estate to others (required)

Own or operate a business that is a primary income source or is in addition to other works (required)

Own a farm or part of a farm (required)



How to Report Answers

Add up balances, as of today, for your savings and checking.

Choose: Yes or No.

Non-retirement investments include any:

- brokerage accounts with stocks and stock options, bonds, savings bonds, mutual funds, money market funds.
- CDs.
- 529 college savings or pre-paid tuition plans, other college savings plans.
- non-qualified (non-retirement) annuities.
- trust funds.
- commodities, precious and strategic metals.
- installment and land sale contracts.
- other valuables.

Choose: Yes or No.

This includes land or property outside of the U.S.

Choose: Yes or No.

This includes land or property outside of the U.S.

Choose: Yes or No



Tips & Strategies

- Depending on whether you answer "Yes" to these questions, you will have additional sections of the CSS Profile to complete.
Including: Parent Asset Details, Parent Other Real Estate Details, Parent Business Details.
- Do you have to report a business if it's not your primary source of income?
Yes, the application asks you to check if you "own or operate a business in addition to other work." This would include any businesses of any size that you report on your tax returns, including businesses you have fractional ownership in.

Section: Parent Asset Details

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

Assets they own but are held in the names of their children (required)

Total value of parent assets held in the names of their children (required)

Current market value of investments (required)



How to Report Answers

Choose: Yes or No.
Do not report assets owned by a sibling in their name, like checking, savings, and investment. See tip below.

This question only appears if answered "Yes" above. If you have children under 19 and are not in college and you are holding your money in their accounts, add up these balances.

Add up balances, as of today, for your non-retirement investment:

- brokerage accounts with stocks and stock options, bonds, savings bonds, mutual funds, money market funds.
- CDs.
- 529 college savings or pre-paid tuition plans, other college savings plans.
- non-qualified (non-retirement) annuities.
- trust funds.
- commodities, precious and strategic metals.
- installment and land sale contracts.
- other valuables.



Tips & Strategies

- Use the investment calculator to get an accurate number of what to report.
Go to www.collegemoneymethod.com/how-to-report-parent-investments-on-fafsa-css-profile/
- How do you correctly report 529 Plans for the question on investments?
Report all 529 Plans and other educational savings plans that you own, regardless if the beneficiary is the student or their siblings. If your other children own their 529 Plan and you are the custodian, you still have to report these accounts if they are under 19 and not in college. You can use the calculator above to answer accurately. Be sure to report these 529 Plans in the primary question about your investments, even in the case of sibling 529 Plans. **Do not report 529 Plans owned outside the immediate family, e.g. owned by grandparents.**
- Do you have to report all money in your children's accounts?
The explanation offered by the application can be confusing. Parents should only report their money being held by children under 19 and not in college. This would include parent funds in custodial accounts, UGMA (Uniform Gifts to Minors Act) accounts, or other savings and investment accounts.

If other children own checking, savings, and brokerage accounts and the funds in those accounts are their money, these balances should not be reported.

Section: Parent Other Real Estate Details

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Number of real estate properties (required)	Enter the # of properties that are not your primary home.
Provide details for each property.	Enter the address of your property.
Current market value of this property (required)	Enter the market value that the property could be sold for today. Do not use assessed, insured, or tax value. If you own it with others, report only your percentage of the market value.
Amount owed on this property (required)	Enter the current payoff amount of the mortgage and related debts. If you own with others, report only the portion of the debt that you owe.
Number of months per year this property is rented to others (required)	Enter the # of months rented in the past 12 months. If the total days are less than one month, enter 0.
Year the property was purchased (required)	If you didn't purchase it, enter the year you took title.
Purchase price of this property (required)	If you didn't purchase it, enter the property's market value when you took title. If purchased or acquired with others, report only your percentage of the purchase price or market value.



Tips & Strategies

- Give yourself the opportunity to report the lowest market value for "Current market value."**
 Don't automatically report the default Zillow estimate as your current market value. Zillow isn't the sole decision maker on your home value.
 Shop for different market values and use the one most favorable for you.
 - Research your market value on other websites like Redfin or Realtor.com
 - Use the market value from your property tax statement. While the application explicitly states don't use the *assessed or taxed value*, some property tax statements include the current market value.
 - Ask a realtor to estimate the current value and get it in an email.
- Adjust the lowest online value for property condition, if applicable.**
 The market value of your home depends on multiple factors beyond the comps and recent sales used by online estimates. You can adjust your property value based on additional factors, like necessary repairs or updates.
- Be careful to report only debt borrowed to pay for the property for "Amount owed on this property."**
 Do not include interest due, escrow payments, insurance premiums, association fees, property taxes, personal loans, consumer loans, or other debts.

Section: Parents Business Details

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Number of businesses owned or operated	Enter the # of businesses of any size in which you are the owner or part-owner/investor.
Name of business (required)	Enter the legal business name.
Current market value of this business - parents' portion only (required)	Enter the price the business could be sold for today. Include all assets of the business (land, buildings, machinery, equipment, inventories, etc...).
Current amount owed on this business - parents' portion only (required)	Include only the current amount owed on the mortgage and related debts for which the business was used as collateral. Do not include personal or consumer loans.
Address (street, city, and state) where this business is located (required)	Enter the physical address, not the mailing address.
Type of business (required)	Choose: Sole proprietorship, Partnership, or Corporation
Primary product or service this business provides (required)	Briefly describe your primary business purpose.
Name of parent who owns this business (required)	Enter one or both parents, depending on ownership.
Percentage of parent ownership (required)	If you own the business with others, enter the percentage you own.
Date this business was started (required)	If not started by you, enter the date the business was acquired.
Do other family members have ownership in this business? (required)	Choose: Yes or No. "Yes" if owners include: the student's siblings, step-siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents.
Provide the names, relationships and percentage of ownership for any family members with ownership in this business. (required)	If Yes, list their names, relationship, and ownership percentage in the additional question.



Tips & Strategies

- **How do you report multiple businesses?**
You indicate the number of businesses you own or operate. The application creates separate "Details" sections for each business.
- **What if you receive a K-1 through a real estate investment as a passive owner?**
You can report the value of your percentage ownership in that real estate investment in the total you include for "Current market value of investments (required)".
- **What if you owned a business in 2024 that has since closed?**
Because this business will show up on your 2024 U.S. income tax return reported on the application, you should use the "Special Circumstances" section at the end of the application to provide an explanation.

Section: Parents Business Details *(continued)*

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

On which tax form is the income for this business reported? (required)

Choose:

- Form 1040, Schedule C: Profit or Loss from Business.
- Form 1040, Schedule E: Supplemental Income or Loss.
- Form 1065, U.S. Return for Partnership.
- Form 1120, U.S. Return for Corporation.
- Form 1120-S, U.S. Return for S-Corporation.
- Other - Enter form type in additional information below.

Gross receipts for this business in 2024 - parents' portion only. (required)

Enter this business's total gross receipts in 2024 without subtracting any costs or expenses.

Total expenses for this business in 2024 - parents' portion only. (required)

Enter the total expenses this business had in 2024.

Do other family members receive a salary or wages from this business? (required)

Choose Yes or No. Only count family members supported by the student's parents, such as the student's siblings and step-siblings.

Provide the names, relationships, and annual salary or wages for any family members employed by this business. (required)

It is only required if you answer "Yes" to the above question.

Provide any additional information about this business, or explain any special circumstances related to this business.

Detail information that explains the nature of your business, including changes from 2024. If you have Cost of Goods Sold, enter that item and dollar amount here.



Tips & Strategies

- **How do you report gross receipts?**

Depending on which tax forms you file as a business owner, this amount can be found on:

- IRS 1040 Schedule C, line 1.
- IRS 1040 Schedule E, lines 3 & 4.
- IRS 1065 line 1a (multiple by the percentage of ownership).
- IRS 1120, line 1a.
- IRS 1120-S, line 1a.

- **How do you report total expenses?**

Depending on which tax forms you file as a business owner, this amount can be found on:

- IRS 1040 Schedule C, line 28.
- IRS 1040 Schedule E, line 20.
- IRS 1065 line 21.
- IRS 1120, line 27.
- IRS 1120-S, line 20.

- **Important, reporting the Cost of Goods Sold.**

It's recommended to include the Cost of Goods Sold, which can be a significant offset to your business' gross receipts. You can enter that information in the final question regarding special circumstances.

Section: Student Income – Student Non-filer/Additional

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Did Student file a tax return for 2024?	Choose: "Completed current tax return," "Estimated current tax return, will file," or "Not filed, and not required to file, a tax return."
How much did Student earn in 2024? Income earned from work (required)	Enter 2024 income reported on W-2 forms (if received) or other earning statements.
Tell us more about income received by Student in 2024. Interest Income.	Enter 2024 interest earned on any interest-bearing accounts.
How much taxable earnings from financial aid did Student receive in 2024? Taxable earnings from need-based work programs and taxable grant and scholarship aid	Enter Taxable earnings from need-based work programs and taxable grant and scholarship aid. These can include earnings from the following: • Work-study program. • Co-op program offered by a college. • Grants, fellowships, and assistantship aid reported as taxable earnings in 2024. • AmeriCorps benefits.
Untaxed portion of any social security benefits	Enter 2024 social security benefits received by the student that were not taxed or reported by the parent.
Other untaxed income	Only report untaxed 2024 income not reported elsewhere on the application



Tips & Strategies

- **How do you report student income if your student doesn't file a U.S. tax return?**
Add up all 2024 income earned on W-2s or other part-time work. Your student may receive a W-2 from their employer even if they are not required to file a U.S. tax return. Otherwise, report earnings received outside of an employer W-2.
Do not include work-study or other need-based work programs under the question "How much taxable earnings from financial aid did Student receive in 2024?"
- **Be careful not to over-report income for "How much taxable earnings from financial aid did Student receive in 2024?"**
This question asks to report only income submitted to the IRS as taxable, even if your student didn't have to file a tax return.
Do not include scholarships, grants, or work-study if they were not taxed.
- **What counts as "Other untaxed income"?**
Gifts or money that your student received from outside of the immediate family are considered untaxed income.

Section: Student Expected Income and Benefits

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked



How to Report Answers

Enter the Student's expected income.

Student's expected earnings - summer 2026 (required)

Estimate conservatively summer 2026 earnings (just the 3-month period) based on previous employment and current plans.

Student's expected earnings - school year 2026-27 (required)

Estimate conservatively school year 2026-27 earnings (just the 9-month period) based on previous employment and current plans. **Do not include Work-study earnings from financial aid**, only additional jobs.

Student's expected other taxed income - summer 2026 (required)

Estimate conservatively for summer 2026 (just the 3 months). Include interest and dividend income.

Student's expected other taxed income - school year 2026-27 (required)

Estimate conservatively for the school year 2026-27 (just the 9 months). Include interest and dividend income.

Student's expected total untaxed income and benefits - summer 2026 (required)

Estimate untaxed income as best as possible for summer 2026 (just the 3 months).

Student's expected total untaxed income and benefits - school year 2026-27 (required)

Estimate untaxed income as best as possible for the school year 2026-27 (just the 9 months).



Tips & Strategies

- **How do you answer "Student's expected earnings" if the student doesn't have a job?**
You should be realistic and honest about your student's plans to work the summer before college and during college. If your student does plan to work, enter a reasonable amount, given the number of hours worked per week and an average hourly wage. If there are no plans to work, enter 0.
- **How do you answer "Student's expected other taxed income" when you can't predict future markets?**
If your student has an investment account, you would only report capital gains if they sell stocks or funds. You can be conservative in your answer and assume that they won't be selling or trading.
- **How do you answer "Student's expected untaxed income and benefits"?**
You should only report future untaxed income guaranteed, such as untaxed Social Security benefits or other federal benefits your student is entitled to. Don't speculate on future untaxed income that isn't promised or planned for.

Section: Student Resources

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

How much does Student expect to receive from the following sources to pay for educational expenses for the 2026-27 academic year?



How to Report Answers

Their parents (required)

Provide the best estimate of what the student's parents completing this application plan to pay from **only their income and assets** for the student's educational expenses.

Scholarships/grants from sources other than the colleges or universities to which they are applying (required)

Report private or local grants and scholarships that the student has received or will receive for 2026-27, including AmeriCorp benefits and competitively awarded tuition exchange scholarships. Do not report federal (Pell) or state grants.

Employers, (i.e. tuition benefits) including their parents' employer(s) and/or their employer (required)

Estimate the amount of the employer benefits that will be reimbursed for 2026-27 costs associated with college, such as tuition, fees, and books.

Relatives other than their parents and any other sources providing funds to help pay for college expenses (required)

Estimate how much money you plan to receive from relatives to help pay for college expenses.



Tips & Strategies

- **How do you provide a fair answer for "Their parents" source?**
This is probably the most difficult question on the application for parents. You don't want to give a number that could be higher than what a college would expect you to pay.
Provide an amount that would be entirely comfortable given your resources.
One option is to take the yearly amount you can afford from your income and divide your college savings by four. Add those two together to arrive at your number.
Another option : If you know your Student Aid Index (SAI), use it as a starting point to understand what colleges might expect you to pay, then take a percentage of that SAI you're comfortable with.
Remember, this is what you *expect to pay*. Allow colleges to decide for themselves , given the information you're submitting in this application.
- **How do you report "Scholarship/grants"?**
You should only report scholarships that the student has already secured and that are guaranteed.
Do not report scholarships you have applied for or are even a finalist for. When you are accepted to colleges and receive financial aid, you will be asked to report additional scholarships at that time.
- **How do you provide a fair answer for "Relatives...and any other sources"?**
The key to answering this question is to only report planned or secured money. If you wait to have a conversation about help from relatives and don't have a commitment, you shouldn't report the money that you are hoping to get for this question.

Section: Student Asset Details

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

Does Student have any of the following assets? Select all that apply.

How much does Student currently have in cash, savings, checking, and deposit accounts? (required)

What is the current market value of Student's investments? (required)

What is the current value of all trusts Student is a beneficiary of? (required)

Is any of the income or part of the principal of the trust currently available? (required)

Who established the trust? (required)

What type of trust is this? (required)

Does Student own any retirement assets?

Current value of all retirement assets. (required)



How to Report Answers

Choose all that apply: "Investments" or "A trust." You may be required to answer the questions below based on your choices.

Add up balances, as of today, from savings and checking. Exclude money from financial aid awards.

Add up balances, as of today, from non-retirement investment accounts. These include any:

- stocks and stock options, bonds, savings bonds, mutual funds, money market funds, CDs.
- UGMA/UTMA accounts.
- non-qualified (non-retirement) annuities.
- commodities, precious and strategic metals.
- installment and land sale contracts.

Add up the value of all trusts, as of today, even if the trust income or money isn't available to access.

Choose: Yes or No. Answer Yes, only if the student has access to the trust money.

Choose: Parents or Other.

Choose: Irrevocable, Revocable, Educational, Testamentary, Other.

Choose: Yes or No.

Add up balances in any of the student's retirement accounts, as of today, including non-education IRA, Keogh, SEP, 401(a), 401(k), 403(b), 408, 457, 501(c), or other tax-deferred retirement accounts.



Tips & Strategies

- **Be careful regarding 529 Plans on the question about investments.**
Any 529 Plans that the student is a beneficiary of that are owned by themselves or their parents are always reported as a Parent Asset, never a Student Asset. Don't report any 529 Plans or other educational savings plans that the student is a beneficiary of but are owned by others outside the immediate family, including grandparents and godparents. The balances of these plans are excluded from reporting on the CSS Profile.
- **Include UGMA/UTMAs on the question about investments.**
You report all UGMA/UTMA (Uniform Gift to Minors Act/Uniform Transfers to Minors Act) accounts that the student is a beneficiary of, regardless of the age they have access to this money. UGMA/UTMA are custodial accounts sometimes opened by relatives to invest on behalf of the student.

Section: Special Circumstances

[Return to Table of Contents ->](#)


Questions Asked

Select all circumstances that have ongoing financial impact for your family. (required)

- ☐ Change in employment
- ☐ Exceptional medical or dental expenses
- ☐ Eldercare or financial support for other family members
- ☐ Non-recurring income or expenses
- ☐ Other
- ☐ None



How to Report Answers

Select all circumstances that apply to you.

When you select the circumstances that apply, provide a detailed explanation (up to 2,000-characters).

The information you enter will be provided to all the colleges you've selected to receive the CSS Profile application.

If you have information specific to an institution, or if you need to provide additional information, you can send it directly to colleges.



Tips & Strategies

- **Be an advocate for your student and family.**
Take this opportunity to provide financial aid officers with important information that is not captured in the standard questions of the application. Many families have a financial reality that may not be reflected in the numbers reported, so use this section to provide a more accurate picture of your financial situation.
- **Detail your case with specific numbers.**
You should be as detailed as possible and provide numbers to demonstrate how special circumstances impact you, your family, and, importantly, your ability to pay for college. Provide specific numbers and amounts about your expenses, income loss, etc..... This will help financial aid officers with exact amounts they can use in their formulas as they calculate your Student Aid Index (aka your ability to pay), which will determine your student's financial aid offer.