

FAST: Frequently Asked Questions For Families

With you every step of the way.

Say goodbye to a complex and time-consuming application process, and say hello to a simplified and streamlined experience with FAST from Independent School Management (ISM).

If you need further assistance and cannot find the answer to your question, email us at familysupport@ismfast.com.

We take your questions seriously and want the application process to be as easy and painless as possible. Any calls or emails will be handled in the order in which they are received by FAST. During our peak periods, you will usually receive a response within 24 business hours, Monday through Friday.

Navigation

How do I set up my FAST account?

All users must create a new FAST account. Once you've registered your new account, you will use the same account if you apply in future years.

1. Click **New User? Register** on the FAST website.
2. Complete the Registration Form: Enter your first and last name, email address, and set a password.
3. **Choose Your Preferred Two-Factor Authentication Method:**
 - **SMS Authentication**
 - Enter your phone number to enable two-factor authentication.
 - You will receive a text message with a code. Enter the code within five minutes to complete the registration process.
 - **TOTP App (Time-based One-Time Password)** (Recommended for international families):
 - Download an authenticator app (we recommend Microsoft Authenticator or Google Authenticator).
 - Follow the instructions provided on the FAST website to link the app to your account.

With two-factor authentication, your data is secure on the FAST Platform.

How do I log back in?

If you've already created a FAST account, log back in by going to the same website, apply.ismfast.com, and following the instructions below.

- **Enter your email address and password** on the NAME login page.
- **Receive a Validation Code:** A text message with a validation code will be sent to your phone. Enter this code to access your account.
- To apply in future years, simply sign in and update your information.

How do I log out?

If using a mobile device, click on the four squares at the top right side of the screen, then click log-out at the bottom.

On the desktop, log out is in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen. The application will automatically log you out after thirty minutes of being idle.

Will I be spammed?

FAST takes security and your privacy very seriously. Your information will never be used for any type of promotions or sales. Your information is never shared with any person or entity other than the school(s) you select in your application.

Account Settings

How do I change my password?

After logging in to your FAST account:

1. Click Settings.
2. Select Account Information.
3. Click Change Password.
4. Enter your current password.
5. Enter and confirm your new password.
6. Click Save.

I moved last year, so I'll have a different physical address on my application this year. How do I change that?

If you have an existing FAST account, the application retains the information you provided last year, which helps save time. You can review and update any details from the previous year, including your address.

Here's how to update your address:

1. Log in to your account.
2. After confirming your name at the beginning of the application, you will be directed to confirm your address.
3. If you need to make changes, select Edit Your Primary Address.
4. Make the appropriate updates.
5. Click Save Changes to apply the new information

Application

Who can apply for financial aid?

Financial aid is typically available to families who need assistance with tuition costs. To determine eligibility, consider the following.

Check Each School's Policies: Review the enrollment and financial aid policies of the specific school(s) you are interested in applying for.

Apply if Needed: Even if funds are limited, families are encouraged to apply for financial aid if they feel they cannot afford the full tuition. While most schools have limited funds, families are encouraged to apply for financial assistance if they feel that they cannot afford the full tuition.

Please note that financial aid awards are not guaranteed. All decisions regarding awards are made solely by the school or organization to which you are applying.

How long will this application take to complete?

The FAST application is designed to be streamlined and user-friendly. It features dynamic questions that simplify the process and significantly reduce the time typically required to complete a financial aid application.

The application's Progress Tracker allows you to track your progress, see how much you've completed, and easily access sections you may wish to update.

How do I know what year to apply for?

Once you've created your account or logged in, you will see your FAST dashboard. The application year defaults to the current academic year; however, if you need to apply for a different academic year, click the link provided on the dashboard that reads, **"If you need to apply for a different academic year, click here."**

Then, select the appropriate year from the drop-down menu and click **Submit**.

We recommend checking with the schools you are applying to for their deadlines and admissions requirements, if any, before applying.

Can I apply to more than one school?

Yes, you can apply to multiple schools for the same academic year. FAST supports hundreds of private, independent schools. If the schools you are applying to use FAST, you can complete and submit one application for all the schools.

The \$60 USD application fee remains unchanged regardless of the number of schools or programs you apply to.

I don't see the school/organization I wish to apply to listed in the application. What should I do?

If you do not see the school or organization you wish to apply to, the school may have yet to start accepting applications or might no longer be accepting applications for the current period. Please contact the school directly to inquire about their application processes and deadlines.

Do I need to submit a separate application for each of my children?

No, you do not need to submit separate applications for each child. FAST allows you to submit one financial aid application regardless of the number of children applying. You can include multiple children in a single application, even if they are applying to different schools or programs. You can add as many applicants as needed and select different schools or programs for each child if applicable.

The \$60 USD application fee remains the same whether you apply for one or multiple children.

My partner/spouse isn't legally obligated to pay for my child(ren). Why do I have to include their income and taxes?

Any adult residing in the home who contributes to financially supporting the household in which the student applicant(s) resides should be included in the application. This may include, but is not limited to: biological parents, adoptive parents, step-parents, guardians, foster parents, grandparents, etc.

Note: Unless an exception is granted by the receiving school(s), all adults in the student's household are expected to be included in the FAST application.

My partner and I are separated/divorced. Will they see any of the personal information I enter here?

Your information is strictly confidential and cannot be viewed by other households.

When a separate household is invited to complete an application, they will not have access to your invitation or your information, and vice versa. Only authorized staff members and administrators at the schools you are applying to have access to your information.

My ex-partner will not fill out their portion of the application. What should I do?

If the student applicant(s) has parents or guardians who live in different households for reasons including but not limited to: divorce, separation, blended family, adoption, or other specific custody arrangements, they should be invited to complete an application.

This process can be completed in the **Invite Other Household** section, where you will enter the other household contact's name and contact details and indicate what applicant(s) they are financially responsible for.

Note: Unless an exception is granted by the receiving school(s), all households related to the student applicant(s) are expected to complete a FAST application.

The FAST application process allows you to complete and submit your application without reliance on the other household(s) to complete their respective application first.

My children do not share the same parents. Will I need to fill out multiple applications?

No. If the student applicant(s) have different parents or guardians who live in different households, the parents or guardians should each be invited to complete one application.

This process can be completed in the Invite Other Household section, where you will enter the other household contact's name and contact details and indicate what applicant(s) they are financially responsible for.

Note: Unless an exception is granted by the receiving school(s), all households related to the student applicant(s) are expected to complete a FAST application. The FAST application process allows you to complete and submit your application without reliance on the other household(s) to complete their respective application first.

What if I don't understand how to answer a question?

If you're unsure how to answer a question, refer to the help text provided for guidance. If you need further assistance, please contact us at familysupport@ismfast.com or 1-877-326-FAST (3278).

The application asks for very personal information. How safe is my information? Who can access my information after I submit the application?

We prioritize the security and confidentiality of your data. All information collected in the FAST application and all required documents are housed on secure servers that meet or exceed industry standards. Only authorized employees and approved administrators at the school or organization you're applying to can access your data. We want to reassure you of our unwavering commitment to safeguarding your personal information and ensuring it is handled with the utmost care.

I applied to two different schools. Each school had different questions and document requirements. Is this normal, or is something wrong?

Yes, this is normal. Each school or organization may have specific questions or document requirements to gather the necessary information from applicants.

Some schools may ask only a few extra questions, while others might require more detailed information. These school-specific requirements are designed to ensure a thorough understanding of each applicant's situation.

What documents will I need to submit?

FAST saves you time and alleviates stress and confusion by verifying your income and tax information through the IRS. In the **Your Documents section**, you will complete the consent form allowing FAST to pull your household's tax information safely and securely into the application from the IRS, including your Federal taxes, W2s, and Business taxes.

Occasionally, this process may not be successful, and additional information will be required to complete the verification process. If this occurs, FAST will email you to notify you of what's needed.

To prevent disruption in processing, please follow these steps when completing the consent form:

1. Enter the legal name and exact address used when filing taxes last year.
2. When inputting your social security number, it is entered accurately.
3. Enter the email address you used to create your FAST account.

Some schools may request additional tax or supporting documents. You can easily and quickly upload those documents in the **Your Documents section** of the application. We encourage you to upload all documents before submitting your application. If you are unable to locate all documents at the time of submission, you can return to do so by logging into your application and selecting Upload More Documents.

Keep in mind that any application that doesn't include all required documents might be considered incomplete and may not be considered for an award. It is essential to be aware of any deadlines the schools you are applying to may have to ensure that you submit all documents on time. Additional documents that may be required include but are not limited to the current year's Federal and State Tax Forms, W2 forms, Business Taxes, paystubs, 1099s, bank statements, mortgage statements, divorce decrees, etc.

What if the school-requested documents do not apply to me?

Not all taxpayers will file all of the forms or schedules. The complete list of required documents is meant to cover the most complicated taxpayer profile to ensure that they receive everything. If you don't have any outside businesses, take the standard deduction offered by the IRS, and work with the same company for the entire year, you'll likely only need to supply Form 1040, Schedule 1, and your employer-issued W2.

If you work as an independent contractor or have a business, a Schedule C, E, or F would be required. In most cases, you'll receive all of the required supporting forms and schedules from your tax preparer.

If you ever need additional information or help to determine what forms you need to supply to FAST, you can reach out to us at familysupport@ismfast.com.

What's a promo code and how do I get one?

Promo codes are fee waivers that some schools may provide. It's important to note that not all schools participate in allocating waivers. FAST cannot offer fee waivers on behalf of a school. For more information, please get in touch with your school/organization directly. FAST will not refund the application fee to families that submit their application before receiving a promo code from their school.

What's the status of my application?

After you have submitted your application, several things will happen.

FAST will make every effort to verify your taxes quickly. This process typically takes 5–10 business days during our peak season. You may receive emails from FAST during this period, requesting additional documentation. It's crucial that you promptly read and respond to these emails by logging back into your FAST account and uploading any missing documents. Until your taxes are fully verified by FAST, your application is considered incomplete. **Please note** that incomplete applications may not be assessed for an award by your school/organization.

Once your application has been verified by FAST, your school/organization will take over and conduct an independent evaluation of the information you've provided. If they have any additional questions or need more documentation, they will contact you directly.

This independent evaluation period is determined only by the school/organization you have applied. Please direct any questions you may have to the school/organization; FAST Customer Service agents cannot speak to any award timeframes or decisions on the school/organization's behalf.

Taxes and Tax Verification

Why do you ask me to confirm my legal name?

To successfully obtain your tax information from the IRS, you must enter the name used on your taxes. Ensure you are using your full first name (Jonathan as opposed to John), and when entering your address make sure to use the address strictly as provided on your tax forms.

Why do you ask me to confirm where I lived in 2024?

In order to successfully obtain your tax information from the IRS, you must enter the address you lived at when you filed your 2024 taxes.

What does the consent process for taxes look like?

The consent process is quick and easy. In the secure form, you will provide your name, SSN/EIN, and contact information. Then, you will complete a quick identity verification step with your government ID and finish by reading and e-signing the authorization document. By providing your consent, our partner, TaxStatus, will request your tax information from the IRS and securely deliver it to FAST.

Why does my partner/spouse have to complete a tax consent form, too?

FAST takes your security seriously. All adults in the home who contribute financially to the household must complete separate TaxStatus consent forms to ensure we have each individual's permission to verify their tax returns.

I do not consent to FAST obtaining my tax documents from the IRS. What should I do?

If you file U.S. taxes, you must authorize FAST to obtain your taxes in order to complete the application process.

What if I do not file taxes?

If you do not file taxes, FAST will accept Social Security Benefit Statements, Disability benefit statements, or unemployment statements which can be easily uploaded to **Your Documents**.

Please note: You will still be required to complete the tax pull consent form within the Your Documents section before uploading these additional supporting documents.

What if I'm an international family and cannot provide U.S. or Canadian taxes?

Those who do not file U.S. taxes will bypass the consent form and can easily upload their documentation in the Your Documents section. Any specific document requirements will be listed in this section.

International Families:

- All documents must be translated into English, and all financials must be converted to USD (U.S. dollars).
- Often, a letter from your employer(s) stating your annual income for the specific tax year the school requires is also requested.
- Business owners should provide an annual statement for the required tax year (translated into English and U.S. dollars).

If you cannot provide the required forms, please contact the school(s) to which you are applying to learn how to proceed.

Can I mail, email, or fax my documentation to FAST?

For security reasons, FAST does not accept taxes or documents via mail, email, or fax machine.

You can easily consent to the IRS pulling your taxes and securely upload any supporting or additional required documents in your application within the Your Documents section.

What are the accepted payment methods?

The non-refundable \$60 USD application fee may be paid with a Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover. If you do not have any of the mentioned cards, please contact your school directly for any payment alternatives they may have, if any.

After Completing the Application

What happens after I have submitted the application?

IRS Authorization:

If you filed U.S. taxes and completed the consent form, your application will proceed as follows:

- Once the IRS provides the requested tax information, it will be verified by FAST.
 - After verification, the recommended financial aid award will be communicated to the school or organization you applied to.
- IRS Authorization Issues:

If the IRS rejects your authorization:

There may be several reasons for this. For example, information could have been entered incorrectly or misspelled. You will receive a notification outlining the steps you need to take to resolve the issue. Follow the instructions provided to address any problems with the authorization.

Additional Documentation Requests:

If any schools or organizations require additional tax information:

- You may receive requests to upload further documentation if not all necessary documents were submitted.
- Ensure you respond promptly to these requests to avoid delays in processing your application.

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You may receive requests to upload further documentation if not all necessary documents were submitted. Ensure you respond promptly to these requests to avoid delays in processing your application.

For Canadian and International Families:

You might receive requests to upload further documentation if not all required documents were included in your initial submission.

To avoid delays in processing your application, ensure you promptly respond to these requests by uploading the necessary additional documentation.

Important: Timely submission of any additional documents is crucial to ensure that your application is reviewed and processed without unnecessary delays. Always check your email and application portal for updates and follow any instructions provided.

Award Decisions

Award decisions will be made after all applications are submitted and verified. The final decision regarding financial aid awards is made by the schools or organizations you applied to, not by FAST. You will be notified directly by the school(s) or organization(s) about the outcome of your financial aid application.

Note: Award amounts are contingent upon the availability of funds and the number of families requesting aid. Contact the school or organization directly for inquiries about the financial aid decision.

I submitted the application, but realize now that I need to make a correction to some of the information. How do I do that?

You can edit any answers until the application is submitted. At the end of the application, you will have the opportunity to review your entries. Please ensure all information is accurate before submitting your application.

After the application has been submitted you will no longer be able to make any edits to the information provided. Please contact your organization directly if you need to modify any of the included information.

What if I need to add another school or program to my application after I have already submitted it?

You can add another school, program, or student after submitting your initial application as long as the deadlines for the new school or organization have not passed and you're applying for the same academic year.

To add an application, follow these steps:

1. Log into your FAST application account.
2. From the post-application screen, select **Apply to Another School**.
3. Click the green **Search** button and enter the school's name.
4. Select the additional school or organization you wish to apply to.
5. Proceed and upload any required documents, and answer any unique school-specific questions.
6. Review and then click **Finalize & Submit**.
7. Click **Submit Application**.

I completed my application and submitted all required documents. I've just gotten an email that says I need to supply more documents. Why? How do I do that?

During verification, there is the possibility that we find that all required documentation was not submitted. The email you received will outline what is outstanding. The missing information will also reflect in the Notifications section of your FAST application.

To upload additional documentation, follow these steps:

1. Log into your FAST application account.
2. From the post-application screen, select **Upload More Documents**.
3. Locate the school from the list and find the document request you need to fulfill.
4. Click the paperclip icon next to the requested document.
5. Click the **Upload** button.
6. Select the appropriate file from your documents, photos, or computer's file(s).
7. Update the name of the document title, if needed in the field provided.
8. Click **Save Document** to attach it to the requested document.
9. Click the X button to go back to Required Documents.

Awarding

Who decides if my family receives an award?

Award Decisions are made solely by the school/organization you have applied to. Any inquiries regarding Financial Aid determination should be directed to your organization. FAST Customer Service Representatives cannot comment on award decisions made by the school/organization.

When will I know if my family receives an award? How will I be notified?

Your school/organization will notify you directly regarding the financial aid decision. Awards are often contingent upon the funds available and the number of families requesting aid. FAST does not make the final decision regarding any awards; all award decisions are made solely by the school/organization to which you have applied. Any inquiries regarding financial aid determination should be directed to your organization.

I don't feel the award amount I received was fair. What options do I have?

Financial aid is often determined based on demonstrated need and the funds your school has available. Even though you may qualify for more assistance, a school's budget might limit its offer. Any questions regarding award decisions must be directed to the school. FAST cannot comment on award decisions made by the school/organization.

If my child doesn't receive an award, I will not enroll them in the school. Can I get a refund on the application fee?

The FAST application fee is non-refundable for any reason.