



Securing today
and tomorrow

Your Social Security Number and Card

SSA.gov



You need a Social Security number (SSN) to work. We use your SSN to record your earnings and determine your eligibility for Social Security benefits and certain government services. Many financial institutions, such as banks and credit companies, also ask for your number when you open an account.

If you are a noncitizen living in the United States, you also may need an SSN. For more information, see *Social Security Numbers for Noncitizens* (Publication No. 05-10096). If you are temporarily in the United States to work, see *Foreign Workers and Social Security Numbers* (Publication No. 05-10107).

How do I get an SSN and card?

To apply for an SSN and card, visit our *Social Security Number and Card* page at www.ssa.gov/ssnumber. On this page, you will answer a series of questions to determine whether you can:

- Complete the application process online.
- Start the application process online, then bring any required documents to your local office to complete the application, typically in less time.
- Complete the full application process at your local office.

If you cannot complete the application online, you must visit a Social Security office. You will need to show us original documents or copies certified by the

issuing agency which prove identity, age, and citizenship/immigration status. We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies.

To learn what documents you need, visit

www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/ss5doc.htm.

Once you complete your application (online or in person), we will mail your card to the address that you provided on your application. You should receive your card within 7-10 business days.

We require an in-person interview for anyone age 12 or older applying for an original SSN, even if a parent or guardian will sign the application on behalf of a child.

What does it cost?

There is no charge for an SSN and card. If someone wants to charge you for getting a number or card, please remember that these services are free. You can report anyone attempting to charge you to our Office of the Inspector General at ***<https://oig.ssa.gov>***.

Are there different types of cards?

We issue 3 types of Social Security cards. All cards show your name and SSN.

- The 1st type of card shows only your name and SSN. People who have this type of card can work without restriction. We issue it to:
 - U.S. citizens.
 - People with Lawful Permanent Resident status.
- The 2nd type of card shows your name and number and notes, “VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH DHS AUTHORIZATION.” We issue this type of card to people lawfully admitted to the United States on a temporary basis who have Department of Homeland Security (DHS) authorization to work.
- The 3rd type of card shows your name and number and notes, “NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT.” We issue it to people from other countries who meet one of the following:
 - They are lawfully admitted to the United States without work authorization from DHS, but with a valid nonwork reason for needing an SSN.
 - They need an SSN because of a federal law requiring an SSN to get a benefit or service.

How do I get my child an SSN?

It is a good idea to request the number when your child is born. You can apply for an SSN for your baby when you apply for your baby’s birth certificate. The state agency that issues birth certificates will

share your child's information with us. We'll assign an SSN and mail the Social Security card to you.

Or you can wait and apply at any Social Security office. If you wait, you must provide evidence of your child's age, identity, and U.S. citizenship status. You must show us evidence of your relationship to, or responsibility for the child. You also must show us proof of your identity. We must verify your child's birth record, which can add up to 12 weeks to the time it takes to issue a card. To verify a birth record, we will contact the office that issued it.

For an adopted child, we can assign your child a number before the adoption is complete, but you may want to wait. Then, you can apply for the number using your child's new name. If you want to claim your child for tax purposes while the adoption is still pending, contact the Internal Revenue Service for Form W-7A, *Application for Taxpayer Identification Number for Pending U.S. Adoptions*. For more information, see *Social Security Numbers for Children* (Publication No. 05-10023).

What if my name changed?

If you legally change your name because of marriage, divorce, court order, or any other reason, you need to tell us so we can issue a corrected card. If you are

working, also tell your employer. To begin a name change, you can follow the steps at [**www.ssa.gov/ssnumber**](http://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber).

If you do not tell us when your name changes, it may:

- Delay your tax refund.
- Prevent your wages from being posted correctly to your Social Security record, which may lower the amount of your future Social Security benefits.

If you need to change your name on your Social Security card, you must show us a document that proves your legal name change. Documents we may accept as proof of a legal name change include:

- Marriage document.
- Divorce decree.
- Certificate of Naturalization showing a new name.
- Court order for a name change.

If the document you provide as evidence of a legal name change doesn't give us enough information to identify you in our records, or if you changed your name more than 2 years ago (4 years ago if you are younger than age 18), you must show us an identity document in your old name (as shown in our records). We will accept an identity document in your old name that has expired.

If you don't have an identity document in your old name, we may accept an unexpired identity document in your new

name. We may do this as long as we can properly establish your identity in our records.

Your new card will have the same number as your previous card but will show your new name.

How do I make sure my records are accurate?

Each year your employer sends us a copy of your Form W-2 (*Wage and Tax Statement*). We compare your name and SSN on Form W-2 with the information in our records. We add the earnings shown on Form W-2 to your Social Security earnings record.

It is critical that your name and SSN on your Social Security card match your employer's payroll records and Form W-2. This will allow us to credit your earnings to your record. It is up to you to make sure that your Social Security records and your employer's records match. If your name or number on the Social Security card is incorrect, contact any Social Security office to make changes. Check your Form W-2 to make sure your employer's record is correct and, if it isn't, give your employer the accurate information.

You can check your earnings record with a personal *my* Social Security account. To review your earnings, go to **www.ssa.gov/myaccount** and create an account.

What if my immigration status or citizenship changed?

If your immigration status changed or you became a U.S. citizen, you should tell us so we can update your records. To get your immigration status or citizenship updated in our records, you need to show documents that prove your new immigration status or citizenship. We can accept only certain documents as proof of citizenship for new and replacement cards. These include a U.S. passport, a Certificate of Naturalization, or a Certificate of Citizenship. If you aren't a U.S. citizen, Social Security will ask to see your current immigration documents.

What if my card is lost or stolen?

You can replace your or your child's Social Security card for free if it is lost or stolen. However, card holders are limited to 3 replacement cards in a year and 10 during a lifetime. Legal name changes and other exceptions don't count toward these limits. For example, changes in noncitizen status that require card updates may not count toward these limits. Also, you may not be affected by these limits if you can prove you need the card to prevent a significant hardship.

To get a replacement Social Security card, you must show us documents proving your identity. You must also

show us documents proving your age and U.S. citizenship, if they're not already in our records.

Your replacement card will have the same name and number as your previous card.

To get a replacement Social Security card, you'll need to follow the steps at [**www.ssa.gov/ssnumber**](http://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber).

How can I protect my SSN?

You should treat your SSN as confidential information and avoid giving it out unnecessarily. You should keep your Social Security card in a safe place with your other important papers. Don't carry it with you unless you need to show it to an employer or service provider.

We do several things to protect your number from misuse. For example, we require and carefully inspect proof of identity from people who apply to replace a lost or stolen Social Security card or apply to correct a card. One reason we do this is to prevent people from fraudulently obtaining SSNs to establish false identities.

We maintain the privacy of Social Security records unless:

- The law requires us to disclose information to another government agency.
- Your information is needed to conduct Social Security or other government health or welfare program business.

You should be very careful about sharing your number and card to protect against misuse of your number. Giving your number is voluntary even when you're asked for the number directly.

If requested, you should ask:

- Why is your number needed?
- How will they use your number?
- What happens if you refuse?
- What law requires you to give your number?

The answers to these questions can help you decide if you want to share your SSN. If you are unsure, don't give out your SSN until you can confirm the need for it.

Contacting Us

The most convenient way to do business with us is to visit **www.ssa.gov** to get information and use our online services. There are several things you can do online: apply for most types of benefits; start or complete your request for an original or replacement Social Security card; find publications; and get answers to frequently asked questions.

When you open a personal *my* Social Security account, you have more capabilities. You can review your *Social Security Statement*, verify your earnings, and get estimates of future benefits. You can also print a benefit verification letter and get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S. Access to your

personal *my* Social Security account may be limited for users outside the United States.

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so you may not need to speak with a representative.

If you need to speak with someone, call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, if you're deaf or hard of hearing. A member of our staff can answer your call from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We provide free interpreter services upon request. For quicker access to a representative, try calling early in the day (between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. local time) or later in the day. **We are less busy later in the week (Wednesday to Friday) and later in the month.**

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