



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, 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-card. On this page, you will answer a series of questions to determine whether you can:

- Start the application process online, then bring any required documents to your local Social Security office or Card Center within **45 calendar days** to complete the application.

You may be eligible to self-schedule an appointment to visit your local Social Security Office or Card Center so we can verify your documents and process your request.

If you cannot start the application online, you must make an appointment to visit a Social Security office or Card Center. You will need to show us original documents

or copies certified by the issuing agency that prove identity, citizenship/immigration status, and age. 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, we will mail your card to the address you provided on your application. You should receive your card within 7 to 10 business days.

We generally 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 **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 noncitizens with a valid nonwork reason who:
 - Need a Social Security number to satisfy a federal statute or regulation that requires them to have one to receive a federally funded benefit. This applies to people residing either within or outside the U.S.
 - Need a Social Security number to satisfy a state or local law that requires them to have one to receive public assistance benefits. This applies if they are legally in the United States.

How do I get my child an SSN?

It is a good idea to request a number when your child is born. You can apply for an SSN for your child when you apply for their 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.

You can choose to wait and apply at any Social Security office or Card Center. You must make an appointment before visiting. 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 may 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 a child you are adopting, we can assign a number before the adoption is complete, but you may want to wait. This is because the new number will be issued in the child's current name and under the biological parents listed on the record. You will need to update the record after the adoption is finalized. If you wait until after the adoption is finalized to apply, we will assign a number using your child's new name and new parent information. 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 an updated card. If you are working, tell your employer. To begin a name change, you can follow the steps at [**www.ssa.gov/personal-record/change-name**](http://www.ssa.gov/personal-record/change-name).

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 doesn't give us enough information to identify you in our records, 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.

Before visiting an office, please call to make an appointment.

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 on your 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. 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 have your immigration status or citizenship updated in our records, you need to show documents that prove your new immigration status or citizenship. We can only accept 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, we will ask to see your current immigration documents.

We worked with DHS/USCIS to expand the Enumeration Beyond Entry (EBE) program to include the Form N-400 – Application for Naturalization. You are now able to update your citizenship status to U.S. citizen, and/or change your name when requesting a replacement Social Security card on the Form N-400. If approved for citizenship, USCIS will collect information on behalf of Social Security to process the SSN card. It is important for you to provide all information requested on the form. We may be unable to fully process your request for the SSN card if we do not receive the necessary information. While some information is not required for processing the immigration document, Social Security uses the name, date of birth, parent's names, country of birth, sex (i.e., male/female) to process the SSN card. If you don't receive your replacement

SSN card within 14 days after receiving your immigration document, please contact your local Social Security office.

Your immigration status may also change if you are a noncitizen who applies for work authorization from DHS using Form I-765 (Application for Work Authorization) or adjust to Lawful Permanent Resident Status using DHS Form I-485 (Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status). If so, you may elect to request an SSN card through those applications, and if approved Social Security will mail your card to the address indicated on your application.

If you do not use the DHS/USCIS forms to indicate that you need an updated SSN card, you will need to visit a local Social Security office to change your citizenship. Call **1-800-772-1213** to make an appointment to complete your application.

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 citizenship, if it's not already in our records.

Your replacement card will have the same name and number as your previous card if you have not legally changed your name.

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

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 request 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 my number needed?
- How will you use my number?
- What happens if I refuse?
- What law requires me to give my number?

The answers to these questions can help you decide whether 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 benefits; start or complete your request for an original or replacement Social Security card; get useful information; 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,

change your direct deposit information (Social Security beneficiaries only), and get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S. If you live outside the United States, visit www.ssa.gov/foreign to access our online services.

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by phone, 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 or if you need to make an appointment to come into an office, 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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