



Securing today  
and tomorrow

# Social Security Numbers for Children

[SocialSecurity.gov](https://www.SocialSecurity.gov) |   

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When you have a baby, one of the things that should be on your “to do” list is to get your newborn a Social Security number. The easiest time to do this is when you give information for your child’s birth certificate while you’re still at the hospital. If you wait to apply for a number at a Social Security office, there may be delays while we verify your child’s birth certificate.

## Why should I get a Social Security number for my child?

You need a Social Security number to claim your child as a dependent on your income tax return. Your child may also need a number if you plan to:

- Open a bank account for the child;
- Buy savings bonds for the child;
- Get medical coverage for the child; or
- Apply for government services for the child.

## Must my child have a Social Security number?

Getting a Social Security number for your newborn is voluntary. But, getting a number when your child is born is a good idea.

### **How do I apply?**

**At the hospital:** When you give information for your baby’s birth certificate, you’ll be asked whether you want to apply for a Social Security number for your baby. If you say “yes,” you need to provide both parents’ Social Security numbers if you can. Even if

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you don't know both parents' Social Security numbers, you still can apply for a number for your child.

**At a Social Security office:** If you wait to apply for your child's number, you must:

- Complete an application for a Social Security card; and
- Show us original documents proving your child's:
  - U.S. citizenship;
  - Age; and
  - Identity.
- Show us documents proving your identity and your relationship to the child.

***NOTE:*** *In some localities, the post office will not deliver your child's card unless the child's name is on your mailbox.*

Children age 12 or older: Anyone age 12 or older who requests an original Social Security number must appear in person for an interview, even if a parent or guardian will sign the application on the child's behalf.

## Citizenship

We can accept only certain documents as proof of U.S. citizenship. These include a U.S. birth certificate, U.S. consular report of birth, U.S. passport, Certificate of Naturalization or Certificate of Citizenship. Noncitizens should see *Social Security Numbers for Noncitizens* (Publication No. 05-10096) for more information.

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## Age

If your child was born in the United States, you need to present your child's birth certificate (if one exists, you must submit it). If a birth certificate doesn't exist, we may be able to accept a:

- Religious record made before the age of 5 showing the date of birth;
- U.S. hospital record of birth; or
- Passport.

If your child was born outside the United States, you need to present your child's foreign birth certificate (if you have one or can get a copy within 10 business days). If you can't get it, we may be able to accept your child's:

- Certificate of Birth Abroad (FS-545);
- Certificate of Report of Birth (DS-1350);
- Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240);
- Certificate of Naturalization; or
- Passport.

## Identity

**Your child:** We can accept only certain documents as proof of your child's identity. An acceptable document must be current (not expired) and show your child's name, identifying information, and preferably, a recent photograph. We generally can accept a non-photo identity document if it has enough information to identify the child (such as the child's name and age, date of birth,

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or parents' names). We prefer to see the child's U.S. passport. If that document isn't available, we may accept the child's:

- State-issued non-driver identification card;
- Adoption decree;
- Doctor, clinic, or hospital record;
- Religious record;
- School or daycare center record; or
- School identification card.

**You:** If you're a U.S. citizen, Social Security will ask to see your U.S. driver's license, state-issued non-driver identification card, or U.S. passport as proof of your identity. If you don't have these specific documents, we'll ask to see other documents that may be available, such as:

- Employee identification card;
- School identification card;
- Health insurance card (not a Medicare card);
- U.S. military identification card; or
- Life insurance policy.

***All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. We can't accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.*** We may use one document for two purposes. For example, we may use your child's passport as proof of both citizenship and identity. Or, we may use your child's birth certificate as proof of age and citizenship. ***However, you must provide at least two separate documents.***

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We'll mail your child's number and card as soon as we have all of your child's information and have verified your child's documents.

## What if my child is adopted?

We can assign your adopted child a Social Security number before the adoption is complete, but you may want to wait until the adoption is finalized. Then, you can apply for the number using your child's new name, with your name as parent. 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*.

## What does it cost?

There's no charge for a Social Security number and card. If someone contacts you and wants to charge you for getting a number or card, please remember that these Social Security services are free. You can report anyone attempting to charge you by calling our Office of the Inspector General hotline at **1-800-269-0271 (TTY 1-866-501-2101 deaf or hard of hearing)** from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time or visit [\*\*http://oig.ssa.gov/report\*\*](http://oig.ssa.gov/report).

## What if I lose the card?

You can replace your Social Security card if it's lost or stolen. You're limited to three replacement cards in a year and 10 during

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your 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.

Your child's Social Security card is an important document. We recommend you keep it in a safe place. **Do not carry it with you.**

## Social Security number misuse

If you think someone is using your child's Social Security number fraudulently, you should file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission via:

- Internet — ***www.identitytheft.gov***;
- Telephone — **1-877-IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338)**; or
- TTY — **1-866-653-4261**.

It's against the law to:

- Use someone else's Social Security number;
- Give false information when applying for a number; and
- Alter, buy, or sell Social Security cards.

## Contacting Social Security

The most convenient way to contact us anytime, anywhere is to visit ***www.socialsecurity.gov***. There, you can: apply for benefits; open a

*my* Social Security account, which you can use to review your Social Security Statement, verify your earnings, print a benefit verification letter, change your direct deposit information, request a replacement Medicare card, and get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S; obtain valuable information; **find publications; get answers to frequently asked questions;** and much more.

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 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.

If you need to speak to a person, we can answer your calls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We ask for your patience during busy periods since you may experience a higher than usual rate of busy signals and longer hold times to speak to us. We look forward to serving you.

## **Social Security Administration**

Publication No. 05-10023

ICN 454925 | Unit of Issue — HD (one hundred)

December 2017 (July 2017 edition may be used)

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Produced and published at U.S. taxpayer expense