



Social Security

Your Social Security Number And Card

www.socialsecurity.gov

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A Social Security number is important because you need it to get a job, collect Social Security benefits and receive some other government benefits. Many other companies you do business with, such as banks and credit companies, also ask for your number.

If you are a noncitizen residing in the United States, you also may need a Social Security number. Ask for the publication, *Social Security Numbers For Noncitizens* (Publication No. 05-10096).

How do I get a number and card?

You must complete an *Application for a Social Security Card* (Form SS-5). To get an application:

- Go to www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ss-5.html on the Internet; or
- Call **1-800-772-1213**; or
- Visit a local Social Security office.

To get a Social Security card, you must provide original documents that show your age, identity and citizenship or lawful noncitizen status. We verify birth documents for U.S. citizens age 1 and older with the office that issued the documents. We verify Department of Homeland Security (DHS) documents

for all noncitizens with DHS. You will get your number and card as soon as we have all of your information and your documents are verified.

What does it cost?

There is no charge for a Social Security number and card. If someone contacts you and wants to charge you for getting a number or card, or for any Social Security service, please remember that 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**.

Types of cards

We issue three types of Social Security cards. All cards show your name and Social Security number.

1. The first type of card shows your name and Social Security number and lets you work without restriction. We issue it to:
 - U.S. citizens; and
 - People lawfully admitted to the United States with permanent DHS work authorization.
2. The second 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 DHS authorization to work.

3. The third type of card shows your name and number and notes, “NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT.” We issue it to people:

- From other countries lawfully admitted to the United States without work authorization from DHS, but with a valid nonwork reason for needing a Social Security number; and
- Who need a number because of a federal law requiring a Social Security number to get a benefit or service.

How do I get my child a Social Security number?

It is a good idea to get the number when your child is born. You can apply for a Social Security number for your baby when you apply for your baby’s birth certificate. We will mail the Social Security card to you. Or, you can wait and apply at any Social Security office, but you will have to provide proof of age, identity and U.S. citizenship for your child and proof of your identity.

In addition, if your child is age 12 or older and needs to apply for an original number, he or she must have an in-person interview. If your child, age 12 or older was born in the United States, he or she must explain why he or she does not already have a Social Security number.

If you need a Social Security number for your adopted child, you may want to wait until the adoption is complete. If you want to claim your child for tax purposes while the adoption is still pending, you need to contact the Internal Revenue Service for Form *W-7A, Application For Taxpayer Identification Number For Pending U.S. Adoptions*. For more information, ask for the publication, *Social Security Numbers For Children* (Publication No. 05-10023).

What if my name changed?

If you change your name, because of marriage, divorce, court order or any other reason, you need to tell Social Security so that you can get a corrected card. If you are working, also tell your employer. If you do not tell us when your name changes, it may:

- Delay your tax refund; and

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

To issue you a corrected card, we need to see one or more recently issued, original or certified documents that show your old name and the name you want on the card, such as a marriage certificate or divorce decree. If you are a U.S. citizen born outside the United States, and our records do not show you are a citizen, you will need to provide proof of your U.S. citizenship. If you are not a citizen, we must see proof of your current immigration status. The new card will have the same number as your previous card but will show your new name.

Make sure your records are accurate

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

It is critical that your name and Social Security number on your Social Security card agree with your employer's payroll records and W-2 so that we can credit your earnings to your record. It is up to you to make sure that both Social Security's records and your employer's records are correct. If your Social Security card is incorrect, contact any Social Security office to make changes. Check your W-2 form to make sure your employer's record is correct and if it is not, give your employer the accurate information.

If you are a worker age 25 and older and not receiving benefits, you receive a *Social Security Statement* every year that summarizes your earnings. Review this *Statement* to make sure that all your earnings are included. If your *Statement* does not include all your earnings, let your employer and/or your Social Security office know about any incorrect information.

What if my immigration status or citizenship changed?

If your immigration status changed or you became a U.S. citizen, you should tell Social Security so your records can be updated. To get your immigration status or citizenship corrected, you need to show documents that prove your new status or citizenship.

What if my card is lost or stolen?

You can replace your card or your child's card for free if it is lost or stolen. Call or visit us. You will need to:

- Complete an *Application for a Social Security Card* (Form SS-5);
- Present a recently issued document to show your identity;
- Show evidence of your U.S. citizenship if you were born outside the U.S. and did not show proof of citizenship when you got your card; and
- Show evidence of your current immigration status if you are not a U.S. citizen.

Your replacement card will have the same name and number as your previous card. We recommend that you keep your Social Security card in a safe place. It is an important document. **DO NOT** carry it with you.

Proving your identity

We can accept original or certified copies of documents to prove your identity. Examples of documents we can accept are:

- Driver's license;
- Passport;
- Employer ID card;
- School ID card;
- Marriage or divorce record;
- Health insurance card (not a Medicare card);

- Military ID card;
- Adoption record; or
- Life insurance policy.

Protect your Social Security number

You should treat your Social Security number 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. Do not 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 lost or stolen Social Security cards, or for corrected cards. One reason we do this is to prevent people from fraudulently obtaining Social Security numbers to establish false identities. We maintain the privacy of Social Security records unless:

- The law requires us to disclose information to another government agency; or
- 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 are asked for the number directly. If requested, you should ask:

- Why your number is needed;
- How your number will be used;
- What happens if you refuse; and
- What law requires you to give your number.

The answers to these questions can help you decide if you want to give your Social Security number. The decision is yours.

Contacting Social Security

For more information, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call toll-free **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.



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