

Your Number And Card

How To Get A Number And Card

To get an original number and card, you'll need to complete an *Application for a Social Security Card* (Form SS-5), and show documents that prove your age, identity, U.S. citizenship or lawful alien status.

To get an application:

- Use www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.html on the Internet.
- Call **1-800-772-1213**.
- Or, visit a local office.

Call your local Social Security office or our toll-free number **1-800-772-1213** before you visit the office. Tell them what documents you have. That way you won't have to make a second trip.

Remember, there is no charge to get a Social Security card. This service is **FREE**.

Types Of Cards

We issue three types of Social Security cards:

1. The card most people have shows your name and Social Security number and lets you work without restriction. We issue it to:
 - U.S. citizens, or
 - people lawfully admitted to the U.S. with permanent Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) work authorization.
2. The second card bears the legend, "NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT." We issue it to people:
 - from other countries lawfully admitted to the U.S. without work authorization from INS; and
 - who need a number because of a federal law requiring a Social Security number to get a benefit or service.

3. The third card bears the legend, "VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH INS AUTHORIZATION." We issue it to people:

- lawfully admitted to the U.S. on a temporary basis; and
- with INS authorization to work.

How To Replace Your Card

To get a duplicate card because yours was lost or stolen, or a corrected card because you have changed your name, call or visit your local Social Security office to use this **FREE** service. You'll need to:

- Complete an *Application for a Social Security Card* (Form SS-5).
- Show evidence of your identity. If you need a corrected card, we need to see one or more documents which identify you by the old name on our records and your new name. The document showing your current identity must be of recent issuance so that we can determine your continued existence.
- Show evidence of your U.S. citizenship or lawful alien status if you were born outside the U.S.

Your duplicate card will have the same name and number as your previous card. Your corrected card will have your new name and the same number as your previous card.

Proving Your Identity

Some documents we can accept to prove your identity are:

- driver's license;
- 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 Number And Records

Your Social Security number is used to keep a record of your earnings. Here are some things you can do to protect your earnings record and to make sure it is accurate:

- Keep your number and card in a safe place to prevent their theft.
- Show your card to your employer **voluntarily** when you start a job, so your records are correct. Don't rely on your memory.
- Check your name and Social Security number on your pay stub and W-2 form to make sure they are correct.
- Notify us every time you change your name.

Giving Your Number To Others

If a business or other enterprise asks you for your Social Security number, you can refuse to give it to them. However, that may mean doing without the purchase or service for which your number was requested. For example, utility companies and other services ask for your Social Security number, but do not need it; they can do a credit check or identify their customers by alternative means.

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.**

Our primary message is this—be careful with your Social Security number and your card to prevent their misuse.

If you think someone is misusing your number, ask us for the leaflet, *When Someone Misuses Your Number* (Publication No. 05-10064).

Privacy Of Records

We can't prevent others from asking for your number. And we can't control what uses are made of your number once you give it to someone. However, you should know that giving it to them does not give them access to

your Social Security records. The privacy of your records is guaranteed unless:

- We are required by law to disclose information to another government agency.
- The information is needed to conduct Social Security or other government health or welfare programs.

What Does Your Number Mean

The nine-digit Social Security number is divided into three parts:


- The first three digits are the area number. If your Social Security number was assigned before 1972 when Social Security cards were issued by local offices, the area number reflects the State where you applied for your number. If your number was assigned in 1972 or later when we began issuing Social Security cards centrally, the area number reflects the State as determined by the ZIP code in the mailing address on your application for the number.
- The middle two digits are the group number. They have no special geographic or data significance but merely serve to break the number into conveniently sized blocks for orderly issuance.
- The last four digits are serial numbers. They represent a straight numerical sequence of digits from 0001-9999 within the group.

For More Information

Check our website at www.ssa.gov for answers to many of the questions you may have about Social Security. You also may call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213**. We can answer specific questions by phone from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. on business days and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may call our TTY number, 1-800-325-0778, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days.

We treat all calls confidentially—whether they're made to our toll-free numbers or to one of our local offices. We also want to ensure that you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some incoming and outgoing telephone calls.

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