



Securing today  
and tomorrow

# Social Security Numbers for Children

**SSA.gov**



The easiest way to get a Social Security number (SSN) for your newborn is to apply when you provide information for your baby's birth certificate in 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 an SSN 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.
- Apply for government services for the child.

## Must my child have a Social Security number?

Getting an SSN for your newborn is voluntary, but may be necessary to obtain important services, such as those listed above, for your child. Therefore, getting a number when your child is born is a good idea.

## How do I apply?

**At the hospital:** When you complete the application for your baby's birth certificate, you will be asked whether you want to apply for an SSN for your baby.

If you say “yes,” you will be asked to provide both parents’ SSNs. If you don’t know both parents’ SSNs, you still can apply for your child’s SSN.

**At a Social Security office:** If you wait to apply for your child’s number, you can use our online Social Security Number and Card application available at [www.ssa.gov/number-card](http://www.ssa.gov/number-card). You will start the application online and complete the process in a local Social Security office or card center. If you are not able to apply online, you can fill out and print our Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5), available at [www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf).

No matter where you apply, you will need to:

- Show us original documents proving your child’s:
  - U.S. citizenship.
  - Age.
  - Identity.
- Show us documents proving your identity and your relationship to your child.

Anyone age 12 or older who requests an original SSN must appear in person for an interview. This applies 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 (valid and unexpired).
- Certificate of Naturalization or Certificate of Citizenship.

Noncitizens should see *Social Security Numbers for Noncitizens* (Publication No. 05-10096) for more information.

## Age

If your child was born in the United States, you need to present your child's birth certificate. If your child does not have a birth certificate, 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.
- U.S. passport or passport card.

If your child was born outside the United States, you need to present your child's foreign birth certificate. You may already have it 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.
- 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. Information may include the child's name and age, date of birth, or parents' names. We prefer to see the child's unexpired U.S. passport. If that document isn't available, we may accept the child's:

- Unexpired valid state-issued nondriver identification card.
- Adoption decree.
- Certified copy of medical record (doctor, clinic, or hospital).
- Religious record.
- Certified school record showing your child's name and your child's age or date of birth (must be for the current or prior year).
- School identification card showing your child's name and either a photograph of your child, your child's age, or date of birth (**must be for the current or prior year**).

**You:** If you're a U.S. citizen, we will ask to see your U.S. driver's license, state-issued nondriver 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:

- Unexpired U.S. passport or passport card.
- Certificate of U.S. Citizenship.
- Certificate of Naturalization.
- School identification card showing your name and either your photograph, age, or date of birth (**must be for the current or prior year**).
- Health insurance card (not a Medicare card) showing your name and either your photograph, or age, or date of birth.
- U.S. military identification card.
- Employee identification card showing your name and either your photograph or date of birth.
- 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 1 document for 2 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 2 separate documents.***

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 an SSN 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. You may want to claim your child for tax purposes while the adoption is still pending. If so, 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 issuing an SSN 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 <https://oig.ssa.gov>.

## What if I lose the card?

You can replace your Social Security card if it's lost or stolen. You're limited to 3 replacement cards in a year and 10 during 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 SSN fraudulently, you should file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission via:

- Internet — [www.identitytheft.gov](http://www.identitytheft.gov).
- Telephone — **1-877-IDTHEFT  
(1-877-438-4338)**.
- TTY — **1-866-653-4261**.

It's against the law to:

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

# Contacting Us

The most convenient way to do business with us is to visit [www.ssa.gov](http://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. 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.**

**Social Security Administration**

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