



# Social Security

## Social Security Numbers For Children



The background features a stylized graphic of the American flag. It consists of several curved, overlapping bands in shades of blue, white, and red. Small white stars are scattered across the design, particularly along the upper curve and in the lower right corner.

[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)

# Social Security Numbers For Children

When you have a baby, one of the things that should be on your “to do” list is getting a Social Security number for your baby. The easiest time to do this is when you give information for your child’s birth certificate. 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 number for my child?

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

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

## Must my child have a Social Security number?

No. Getting a Social Security number for your newborn is voluntary. But, it is a good idea to get a 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. The state agency that issues birth certificates will share your child's information with us, and we will mail the Social Security card to you.

If you wait to apply at a Social Security office, you must show us proof of your child's U.S. citizenship, age and identity, as well as proof of your own identity. We must verify your child's birth record, which can add up to 12 weeks to the time it takes to issue a card. To verify a birth certificate, Social Security will contact the office that issued it. We do this verification to prevent people from using fraudulent birth records to obtain Social Security numbers to establish false identities.

## How do I apply?

**At the hospital:** When you give information for your baby's birth certificate, you will 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 you do not 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* (Form SS-5); and
- Show us original documents proving your child's:
  - U.S. citizenship;
  - Age; and
  - Identity.
- Show us documents proving your identity.

**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 requesting 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.

## Age

You need to present your child's birth certificate. (If one exists, you must submit it.) If a birth certificate does not exist, we may be able to accept:

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

- Adoption decree;
- Doctor, clinic or hospital record;
- Religious record (e.g., baptismal record);
- Daycare center or school record; or
- School identification card.

You: If you are a U.S. citizen, Social Security 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 do not have these specific documents, we will 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 cannot 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.**

We will 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. 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 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, 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**.

## What if I lose the card?

You can replace your Social Security card if it is lost or stolen. You now are limited to three replacement cards in a year and 10 during your lifetime. Legal name changes and other exceptions do not 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.

We recommend you keep your child's Social Security card in a safe place. It is an important document. **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 by:

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

It is against the law to:

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

## Contacting Social Security

For more information and to find copies of our publications, visit our website at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://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 treat all calls confidentially. We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Generally, you'll have a shorter wait time if you call during the week after Tuesday. We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

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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