

## Lawfully Admitted Aliens

### When You Need a Social Security Number And When You Don't

This information is taken directly from the Social Security Administration's web site at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

#### When a Lawfully Admitted Alien Needs a Number

If you are a lawfully admitted alien with the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) permission to work in the U.S., you need a Social Security number. Also, if you are a lawfully admitted alien who does not have permission to work, but wants to enlist in the U.S. military, federal law requires you to have a Social Security number. The number is used as your military service number.

#### You May Need a Number for Other Reasons

State and local laws that conform with federal law may require you to give a Social Security number--even if you don't have permission to work. The Social Security Act permits state and local governments to use the number to administer laws related to—

- taxes;
- general public assistance;
- driver licensing; or
- motor vehicle registration.

#### How Do You Get A Number?

To apply for a Social Security number—

- Call or visit one of the Social Security Administration offices to apply for a number.
- Provide original documents showing your age, identity and lawful alien status (including your permission to work in the U.S.).

If you don't have permission to work, but still need a number, you must provide a letter, on letterhead stationery (no form letters or photocopies), from the government agency requiring you to get a number. The letter must—

- specifically identify you as the applicant;
- cite the law requiring you to have a Social Security number; and
- indicate that you meet all the agency's requirements, except having the number.

If you are assigned a number for non-work purposes, you can't use it to work. If you use it to work, we may inform USCIS.

### **If You Need a Number For Tax Purposes--What Can You Do?**

If you need a number for tax purposes, but don't meet Social Security's requirements to be assigned a number, you can apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Visit IRS in person or by calling the toll-free IRS number 1-800-TAXFORM (1-800-829-3676) and request form W-7, *Application for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number*.

### **What Can You Get Without a Number?**

As a lawfully admitted alien, you can obtain many benefits and services without having a number, even though you're asked to give one. You don't need a number to—

- **Purchase savings bonds.** A lawfully admitted alien may be designated a co-owner or beneficiary without a number.
- **Conduct business with a financial institution.** For tax purposes, financial institutions will ask you for a taxpayer identification number. If you aren't eligible for a Social Security number, contact IRS. IRS can help you determine if you need an ITIN.
- **Register for school or apply for educational tests.** Schools aren't authorized to use the number to administer education programs. A student applying for the SAT, GRE and other educational tests doesn't need a Social Security number to take the test.
- **Report group health insurance coverage.** Employers aren't required to report Social Security numbers for lawfully admitted alien family members who are covered by group health plans but don't have numbers.
- **Apply for school lunch programs.** The parent applying for free or reduced-price lunch for the child(ren) can use his/her own number or should get a letter from Social Security stating no number will be assigned.
- **Apply for HUD housing.** Family members age 6 and older must give a Social Security number or get a letter from us stating no number can be assigned.

### **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 <http://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/> 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 USCIS 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 USCIS; 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 USCIS AUTHORIZATION.**" We issue it to people:
  - ✓ lawfully admitted to the U.S. on a temporary basis; and
  - ✓ with USCIS 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.

## How do I apply for a Social Security card if I live outside the U.S.?

If you live outside of the U. S., we can assign you a Social Security number or issue you a duplicate or corrected card if you are: (1) a U.S. citizen or (2) a non-citizen admitted to the U.S. for permanent residence or with other Immigration and Naturalization Service authority to work in the U.S. Otherwise, we can assign you a number or issue a duplicate or corrected card **only** if a Social Security card is required by law as a condition of receiving a federally-funded benefit to which you have an established entitlement.

## What Form Do I Need?

To apply for a Social Security Card if you live outside of the U.S., you need to complete and sign Form SS-5-FS, Application for a Social Security Card Foreign Service that you can obtain from [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov). Use this form if you are living outside the United States or are applying on behalf of a child who is living outside the United States.

## What Evidence Do I Need?

The SS-5-FS explains what evidence you will need to submit with your application.

## Where Do I Send the Form?

You should take or mail the completed form with the required original documents or copies certified by the custodian of the record, to the nearest U.S. Social Security office, U.S. Embassy or consulate, or if you live in the Philippines, to the Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Manila. If you are a U.S. military dependent or a U.S. citizen working on a U.S. military post, you may also go to the Post Adjutant or Personnel Office. These offices can copy and certify your records so that you do not have to send original documents through the mail. **Do NOT mail original documents to the Social Security Administration in Baltimore, Maryland.** Your Social Security card will be mailed to you from the United States.



800-437-7313

### **For More Information**

Check the Social Security Administration's website at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) for answers to many of the questions you may have about Social Security. You also may call them toll-free at **1-800-772-1213**. They 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 their TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days.

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