AARP

# Filing for Social Security

## WHAT TO *KNOW*

### Eligibility

- You must earn 40 credits, or be married to or the survivor of an eligible worker.
- You can earn up to 4 credits per year by paying Social Security taxes on your work income.

### Payments

- Social Security payments are based on your highest 35 earning years.
- Payments arrive via direct deposit the month after they're due (e.g. your June payment comes in July).

### Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

- To keep up with inflation, payments are usually increased each January via a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).

### Claiming Age

- Early retirement begins at 62, but payments are reduced. Claiming early also reduces survivor payments claimed on your record.
- At Full Retirement Age (FRA), you receive 100% of your payment. It's 66 or 67 and based on your birth year. FRA is 67 for those born in or after 1960.
- You can delay claiming up to 70. Your payment increases up to 124% at 8% each year. Survivor payments claimed on your record also increase.

## WHAT TO *DO*

Create or review your *my* Social Security account to track your credits.

Review your *my* Social Security account to track your earnings history.

Visit ssa.gov/cola for the amount and *my* Social Security account for your updated payment.

Visit your *my* Social Security account for your FRA and estimated payments at various claiming ages.

Assess your health, work history, finances and impact on any spousal and survivor payments to help you decide when to claim Social Security.

**SSA**

ssa.gov

1-800-772-1213

**Protect & Strengthen SS**

aarp.org/yes

aarp.org/SocialSecurity Voter

**AARP Resource Center**

SCAN ME

**Personal Assistance**

answers.aarp.org/ socialsecurity

Social Security experts answer your questions

## WHAT TO *KNOW*

### Spouse

- Spouses and ex-spouses can receive up to 50% of an eligible worker's FRA payment. The amount is reduced if you claim before your FRA.
- To be eligible for spousal payments if you are married, you must: be at least 62, married a year or longer and your spouse must have already claimed Social Security.
- To receive a spousal payment if you are divorced, you must be: at least 62, have been married for at least 10 years and not remarried before 60.
- You can claim spousal payments at 62, but you'll get the highest payment at your FRA.
- If you were married more than once, you collect on the current spouse's record, unless you remarried after age 60. In that case, you collect on the spouse with the higher payment.

### Survivor

- A survivor (married or divorced) can receive up to 100% of an eligible worker's payment. The amount is reduced if you claim before your FRA.
- To receive survivor payments, you must have been married for at least 9 months or for 10 years if you divorced.
- You can claim survivor payments at age 60, but you'll get the highest amount at your FRA.

## WHAT TO *DO*

Talk with your spouse, a Social Security representative or others to determine when and what type of payments to claim.

Talk with a Social Security representative to claim survivor payments.

| WHAT TO *KNOW* | WHAT TO *DO* |
|---|---|
| **Switching**<br>‣ You cannot collect both your own Social Security and a spouse's or survivor's payment at the same time. You will only receive the higher of the two.<br>‣ You cannot collect spousal payments first and switch to your own payment later.<br>‣ You can collect your own payments first and then switch to spousal payments if your spouse has not already claimed. If you originally claimed before your FRA, your spousal payments are reduced.<br>‣ If you are divorced, you can switch from your own payment to survivor payments, or vice versa. Your survivor payments are highest if you claim at your FRA.<br>‣ You can collect survivor payments first and switch to your own payments later, or vice versa. Your survivor payments are highest if you claim at your FRA. | Talk with a Social Security representative to help understand your options and payments.<br><br>File a new application to switch as soon as you are eligible. |
| **Applying**<br>‣ You must apply for Social Security. It is not automatic. You can apply online, by phone or in-person.<br>‣ Technology is used to detect suspicious activity in phone-based applications. If a claim raises red flags, you will need to verify your identity in person at a local office. | File for Social Security up to 4 months before you want your first payment to start, known as your election month.<br><br>Provide your Social Security number and direct deposit information to set up the required electronic transfer for payments. |
| **Earnings Limit**<br>‣ If you claim before your FRA, your payment will be reduced $1 for every $2 in employment income above a certain amount.<br>‣ If you claim in the year of your FRA, your payment will be reduced $1 for every $3 in employment income above a certain amount until you reach the month of FRA.<br>‣ If you claim at or after your FRA, your payment is not reduced. You can earn any amount of work income. | Review the two earnings limit amounts and their impact on your payment. They usually change (increase) each year. |

**Taxes**

| Social Security Federal Tax: | *Combined Income for: Individual | *Combined Income for: Married, Filing Jointly |
|---|---|---|
| None | Less than $25,000 | Less than $32,000 |
| Up to 50% | Over $25,000 | Over $32,000 |
| Up to 85% | Over $34,000 | Over $44,000 |

*Combined income includes your adjusted gross income, tax-exempt interest income & half of your annual SS payments.

- Taxpayers 65+ can claim a bonus $6,000 senior deduction for tax years 2025–2028, potentially lowering Social Security taxes, if income is below $75,000 (individual) or $150,000 (couple); deduction phases out above these limits and can be stacked.
- Eight states tax Social Security: Colorado, Connecticut, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Vermont and Utah.

What to do:

Access your SSA-1099 tax form through your *my* Social Security account.

Visit IRS.gov or your state tax agency for Social Security tax and deduction details.

Talk with a financial professional for guidance.

Consider having your Social Security taxes withheld using tax form W-4V.

| WHAT TO *KNOW* | WHAT TO *DO* |
|---|---|
| **Advocacy**<br>‣ AARP will never stop fighting to protect and strengthen the SS payments you earned.<br>‣ In a few [6 to 8] years, Social Security will have about 80% of the money it needs to make full payments.<br>‣ Congress must act to keep Social Security strong. | Become a Social Security voter.<br><br>Visit aarp.org/SocialSecurityVoter |

## TO DO

- ○ Create and review *my* Social Security account
- ○ Talk with others about claiming options and strategies
- ○ Coordinate with my spouse to maximize long-term payments
- ○ Find more information to assist my Social Security decisions
- ○ Attend more events to continue learning about Social Security
- ○ Take an advocacy action to protect & strengthen Social Security
- ○ Decide when to claim Social Security
- ○ Decide what type of Social Security payment to claim (own, spousal, survivor)
- ○ File application for Social Security
- ○ Re-file application if switching payments (own, spousal, survivor)