

What immigrants and new citizens should know about social security numbers

Written by Rhonda Whitenack and Jim Czechowicz , Social Security Public Affairs Office in Minneapolis
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Whether you are a new U.S. citizen or a noncitizen with authorization to work in this country, you need to apply for a Social Security card and number in order to work in the United States.

While most American citizens now have Social Security cards issued at birth, a noncitizen applying for his or her first Social Security card or number must prove identity, age and citizenship.

Getting a Social Security card if you are a naturalized citizen

If you are a naturalized citizen you will need to prove your citizenship with documentation from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly Immigration and Naturalization Service). You also must complete an application for a Social Security card, which you can find online at www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ss-5.pdf . You can bring your completed application into your local Social Security office or Social Security Card Center along with official documents that show:

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- U.S. citizenship;
- Age; and
- Identity.

All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.

Even if you already have a Social Security number when you become a naturalized U.S. citizen, you should still contact Social Security to update your status.

Getting a Social Security card if you are a noncitizen All noncitizens needing a Social Security number must prove their immigration status, and also show proof of age, identity and work authorization from the Department of Homeland Security. To prove your age, you must show your birth certificate if you have it or can easily get it. If not, we can ask for other documents, such as your passport.

As proof of immigration status and identity, Social Security will ask for your unexpired passport and current immigration documents from the Department of Homeland Security, including a:

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- Permanent Residence Card or Form I-551;
- Arrival-Departure Record or Form I-94 with an unexpired passport; or
- Work permit card – Form I-766 or I-688b.
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These documents must be current, meaning they cannot be expired. And, again, all documents must be either originals or copies certified by the agency that issued them. We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.

If you would like more information about Social Security cards and the requirements needed to get one, just visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber . If you do not have access to the Internet, you can call our toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) and ask for the publication, Your Social Security Number And Card, or Social Security Numbers For Noncitizens.