

# Social Security Benefits

Although it may seem straightforward, social security benefits can be quite complex and often vary depending on each individual's circumstances

## How do I apply for Social Security benefits?

You can apply online via the Social Security Administration's website, by phone, or in person at a local office. It's best to apply three months before you want to begin receiving benefits.

## How are my Social Security benefits calculated?

Benefits are based on your 35 highest-earning years, adjusted for inflation. The SSA uses your average indexed monthly earnings (AIME) to determine your Primary Insurance Amount (PIA).

## Can I collect Social Security benefits if I'm still working?

Yes, you can, but if you're under Full Retirement Age (FRA), earning too much may reduce your benefits. Once you reach FRA, your benefits won't be impacted by work.

## Can I receive Social Security benefits from my spouse's work record?

Yes, you can claim benefits based on your spouse's record if you're married for at least 10 years, and if it's higher than your own benefits.

## What is the impact of taking Social Security early?

Taking Social Security before your Full Retirement Age reduces monthly benefits by up to 30%. However, you get income earlier, which may benefit some based on personal circumstances.

## Can I change the start date of my Social Security benefits?

Yes, you can change your start date if you're within 12 months of beginning benefits. After that, you can suspend your benefits and potentially earn delayed retirement credits.

## How does divorce affect my Social Security benefits?

If married for at least 10 years, you may qualify for benefits based on your ex-spouse's work record, even if they've remarried, provided you're not remarried yourself.

## What if I'm receiving Social Security and return to work?

If you're under FRA, your benefits may be temporarily reduced if you exceed the earnings limit. After FRA, you can work without affecting your benefits.

## How are Social Security benefits affected by inflation?

Social Security benefits are adjusted annually through Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA), helping to keep up with inflation and maintain purchasing power over time.

