

Social Security Cheat Sheet

From the editors of the [Retirement Blog](#)

Are you single?	Best to wait until age 70 to start benefits but you have additional options: Are you divorced? Maybe entitled to part of ex-spouse benefit Are you a widow/widower? Maybe entitled to survivor benefit Your own benefits can continue to grow while you use divorcee/survivor benefits
Are you divorced?	Unbelievably, divorced people can potentially get the most from Social Security as they can each claim a spousal benefit from each other as their own benefit gets larger until age 70.
Married?	Married people can choose to take their own benefits or a portion of their spouse's benefits and then switch between these categories later for a larger amount. Additionally, a bad choice by one spouse about starting Social Security benefits can also reduce spousal benefits.
Best age to start	Unless you have a shortened life expectancy (i.e., the doctor says you have 10 years to live) or MUST have the money just to get by, it is a bad idea to start Social Security benefits at age 62. Waiting until age 66 or even better, to age 70, will give you a lot more money over your life time (76% more age 70 vs age 62). It is better to spend your principal to live on and allow your SS benefits to grow until age 70.
Does it matter when you stop working?	Yes. If you were a late starter in life, it pays to work as many years past age 60 as you can. Prior to age 60, the Social Security Administration stops indexing your past earnings for any inflation. So those past earnings become less and less "weighted" in computing your annual Social Security benefit. Since your Social Security benefit is based on your highest 35 years of earning income, a late bloomer who has experienced most of his income later in life will benefit by adding more of those high income years to their calculation.
If you already started your benefits, can you change your mind?	Within 1 year, you can reverse any decision you have made by paying back amounts you have received. If longer than 1 year and you have started your own benefits, you can stop them at age 66 or later and start up again at age 70
Are my Social Security payments reduced if I am working?	Yes, if under age 66 and you earn more than modest amounts. At age 66 you can earn as much as you like without reduction in benefits. The reductions from earning "too much" are recovered by you in a larger check after turning age 66.
How Can I get Medicare Part B premiums paid if I am not receiving Social Security yet?	You need to send a check each month or the consequences can negate receiving a higher Social Security benefits by waiting to start at a later age
Do I pay income tax on my Social Security benefits?	Many people do. If your adjusted gross income (not including Social Security) plus 50% of your SS benefits plus any tax-free interest from municipal bonds is more than \$25,000 on a single return or \$32,000 on a joint return.
Are there any qualifying periods needed to be eligible to collect spousal benefits?	Yes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ a full year of marriage before a spouse can collect a spousal benefit ➤ nine months of marriage before a spouse can collect a survivor benefit ➤ 10 years of marriage to collect on ex-spouses work record

Want to see examples of the above and get more details on maximizing your Social Security Income?

Download our Complete 15-page Guide

["How to Maximize Your Social Security Benefits"](#)

Share the Love

