



Your Top 6 Questions About Social Security Benefits – Answered

1. When am I eligible to file for Social Security Benefits?

You're eligible to file for Social Security benefits once you have been age 62 for an entire month. This is referred to as the Month of Entitlement (MOET). The Social Security Administration has determined that you attain the age 62 one day before your birthday for filing purposes. Meaning if your 62nd birthday falls on October 3rd, you'll attain age 62 the day before on October 2nd. But because you will attain age 62 on the 2nd, you won't be considered age 62 for the entire month, so you won't be able to file until the following month of November. However, if your birthday falls on the 2nd, you would be able to file for benefits during October because you would attain age 62 on the 1st and be considered 62 for the entire month of October. You will always receive your benefit check in the month following the month for which it is due.

2. If I claim a reduced benefit and later become entitled to a higher spousal benefit once I reach my Full Retirement Age (FRA), will I collect the full 50% spousal benefit?

No, even if the spousal benefit occurs at or after the dependent spouse's FRA, the benefit will never be the full 50% of the other spouse's monthly benefit if the dependent spouse filed early for their retirement benefit.

Example:

Suppose Sarah, now age 67, filed for her retirement benefit at 62. Her full benefit amount of \$800 was reduced to \$600 for claiming 48 months before her FRA of age 66.

Sarah's husband, Dale, just turned 70 and filed for his benefit at his FRA for \$2,600, so Sarah's maximum spousal benefit would be \$1,300. Here's how to calculate Sarah's new benefit amount:

1. Subtract Sarah's primary insurance amount PIA (\$800) from the maximum spousal benefit (\$1,300) $\$1,300 - \$800 = \$500$ (spousal boost)
2. Add the \$500 spousal boost to her current retirement benefit $\$600 + \$500 = \$1,100$ (new benefit payment)

3. When I file for my benefits, will my earnings still be subject to Social Security taxes if I continue to work?

Yes, your earnings from work will still be subject to payroll taxes, including Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA), when you file for Social Security. There are some exceptions in specific states for earnings from teacher retirement systems or certain government employees. But those situations come with unique required contributions, much like FICA, to that employer's parallel pension system.

4. Can I claim a benefit under my spouse's record if I haven't worked long enough to earn my own Social Security benefit?

Yes, you can! But there's a catch. The wage-earning spouse must file for benefits before a dependent spouse can claim a spousal benefit.

5. Will my Social Security benefits end before I die?

No, you will continue to receive your monthly benefit amount as long as you're alive. That said, knowing what happens next can help you or your surviving spouse avoid unsettling surprises. Benefits are never paid for the month of death regardless of the date of death. If you are the surviving spouse and are already collecting spousal benefits at the time of your spouse's death, your benefits will automatically convert to survivor benefits with no action required on the your part. If you are collecting your own retirement benefit at the time of your spouse's death and your spouse's benefit is higher than your own, you must contact Social Security as soon as possible to apply for survivor benefits.

6. How accurate are my benefit estimates on my Social Security statement?

It depends. The closer you are to benefit estimate ages (62, FRA, or 70), the more accurate the benefit estimations are likely to be. Benefit estimations are based on your highest 35 years of indexed earnings, so the closer you are to filing, the more accurate those estimations will be. To project future benefits, SSA will assume that you will continue to earn at roughly the same rate as your most recent year of recorded earnings.

