



SSN, ITIN and Credit History

Social Security Number

The Social Security Act of 1935 established a national social insurance plan to provide economic security to the nation's workers. The two major provisions of the Act relating to the elderly were Title I--Grants to States for Old-Age Assistance, and Title II--Federal Old Age Benefits. Title II has become what is known today as Social Security and now provides cash benefits to retired and disabled workers and their families, as well as survivors of deceased workers.

As a lawfully admitted alien possessing work authorization from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), you need a Social Security number. Your social security number is a unique identifier. You are the only person who has that number. State and local governments use the Social Security number to administer laws related to: taxes, general public assistance, driver's license, or registration of motor vehicles. There are five major categories of benefits paid through your Social Security taxes - retirement, disability, family benefits, survivors and Medicare.

To apply for your Social Security number, take your INS documents to a Social Security office. You will need to fill form SS-5. If you are issued a Social Security number for non-work purposes, you can't use it to work. If you use it to work, the Social Security Administration may inform the INS.

For more information call Social Security's toll free number, 1-800-772-1213 for 24 hours assistance or visit <http://www.ssa.gov>.

Taxpayer Identification Number

An ITIN, or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (commonly known as TIN), is a tax processing number that became available on July 1, 1996, for certain non-resident and resident aliens, their spouse and dependents. This number is only available to individuals who cannot get a Social Security Number (SSN). It is a 9 digit number, beginning with the number "9".

TIN numbers are only used for federal income tax purposes. The issuance of an TIN does not: entitle the recipient to Social Security benefits or the Earned Income Tax Credit; create an inference regarding the individual's immigration status or give the individual the right to work in the U.S. When completing the tax return the individual will enter their TIN in the space for the SSN. TIN numbers are NOT valid for work purposes.

If you file a US tax return or you are listed on a tax return as a spouse or a dependent and you do not have, and cannot obtain, a valid Social Security Number, you must apply for a TIN. Each person listed on the return must have a valid TIN (either an SSN or an ITIN). If a return requesting a refund is filed without an SSN or TIN for the primary filer and spouse, the refund will be delayed until they obtain the identification number. If a dependent SSN/TIN is missing, the exemptions will be denied and refunds will be adjusted accordingly.

To obtain a TIN, you must complete IRS Form W-7, Application for IRS Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. You may complete and sign a Form W-7 for a minor dependent. Other dependents and spouses must complete and sign their own Forms W-7. The Form W-7 requires documentation substantiating foreign/alien status and true identity for each individual. If you, your spouse and/or dependents need a TIN, you may submit separate Forms W-7 and documentation at the same time.

For more information visit: <http://www.irs.gov>

Credit History

Everyone's financial health can benefit from a clean bill of credit. When you need help buying a car, getting a new home or obtaining a loan for any other purpose, being the proud owner of a good credit history will pave the way. It may also enable you to get a lower rate, which can save you big bucks over the life of any loan.



When you apply for a loan, the creditor will obtain something called your credit report. This report contains information about your credit based on your social security number. Anyone who has obtained credit has a credit history. If you've borrowed money for a credit card, retail store, student loan or any other type of loan, most lending institutions will report information to major credit-reporting agencies such as Equifax, Experian (previously TRW) or TransUnion. Credit reporting agencies use a formula based, in part, on your usage and payment history, which is commonly known as your credit score. Some lending institutions will use the credit reporting agency's credit score to assist in making their decisions.

Information regarding the three main credit agencies is mentioned below.

Equifax 1-800-685-1111
<http://www.equifax.com>

Experian 1-888 EXPERIAN (1-888-397-3742)
http://www.experian.com/experian_us.html

TransUnion 1-800-916-8800

<http://www.transunion.com>

Whether or not you pay your credit obligations in a timely manner will impact your credit score. Delinquent or skipped payments may lower your score. It is important to pay at least the minimum payment on all of your bills every month to maintain a favorable credit score. The calculation of your credit score also takes into consideration your record of repayment of your past loans according to the credit agreement. If you are in default of those terms, your credit score may be negatively impacted and it may reduce your chances of getting the loan that you want.

In addition, you should be cautious of applying for every credit card offer that comes to you in the mail. Each time you apply for or request credit, a credit inquiry is created on your credit file. Having excessive credit bureau inquiries on your credit report is another factor that could impact your credit score or your ability to obtain the credit that you want. Displaying good credit habits may enhance the likelihood that you will qualify for that car loan, mortgage loan, student loan or any other type of loan.

It may also be a good idea to obtain a copy of your credit bureau report to verify that all of your accounts are being reported correctly. If you discover inaccuracies or accounts that you do not believe belong to you, you should contact the appropriate credit reporting agency to inform them of your findings or any items in question. The credit reporting agency must work with you to resolve any discrepancies related to information reported on your credit file.

Remember that if you have an unsatisfactory credit history, you may still qualify for a loan, but may not be offered the most favorable rate, which will eventually cost you money.