

## THE DECISION YOU ONLY MAKE ONCE

# When to Claim Social Security

How your claiming age sets your monthly check for life — and what to weigh before you decide. A plain-English one-pager from the team at Healthvocate.

**Age 62–70**  
your one-time claiming window

**~\$182K**  
median lifetime gain from optimizing  
(NBER)

**~8% / yr**  
credit for delaying past full age

Your claiming age sets your Social Security benefit for life, and few people claim at the age that's best for them (NBER). Here's how the timing works — and what to weigh.

## What your claiming age does to your check

| Claim age                     | Monthly benefit (vs. full) | What it means   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Age 62 (earliest)             | ~70%                       | Permanently reduced — but more checks over your lifetime. |
| Age 65                        | ~86.7%                     | A partial early-claiming reduction.                       |
| Age 67 (Full Retirement Age)  | 100%                       | Your full benefit — the baseline.                         |
| Age 70 (latest worth waiting) | ~124%                      | Delayed credits maxed — the largest possible check.       |

Percentages assume a full retirement age of 67 (it's 66–67 by birth year). Get your exact numbers at SSA.gov.

## What to weigh before you claim

- **Health & longevity** — waiting pays off only if you outlive your break-even age (often the early 80s).
- **Spouse & survivors** — the survivor keeps the larger benefit, so the higher earner delaying protects them.
- **Still working** — before full retirement age, higher earnings can temporarily withhold benefits (repaid later).
- **Taxes & other income** — up to 85% of benefits can be taxable; other savings may give you room to delay.
- **Break-even age** — know the age at which waiting finally pulls ahead before you decide.

### Common mistakes

- Claiming at 62 by default, without running the numbers.
- Ignoring the survivor-benefit impact on a spouse.
- Forgetting the earnings test while still working.
- Waiting past 70 (no extra credit after 70), or not checking your record for errors.

### Run your own numbers.

Healthvocate models your claiming options against your situation — your full retirement age, your estimated benefit, and your break-even — in plain English. The decision stays yours, with the math in front of you. Start free at [HealthVocate.com](https://HealthVocate.com).

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