RETIREMENT FASTLANE

FREE PRINTABLE WORKSHEETS

The Social Security Fastlane

When to Claim, How to Maximize, and What to Avoid

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These worksheets come from *The Social Security Fastlane* by Daniel Larsen, CFA, part of the Retirement Fastlane series. Print as many copies as you like for your own personal, non-commercial use. Fill them out in pencil and update them as your plans change.

For educational purposes only; not individualized investment, tax, legal, or insurance advice. Examples and figures follow the book (2027 figures as of November 18, 2026). See the Important Disclaimer in the book before relying on anything here.

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Worksheet A: Social Security Fact Sheet

Use with Chapters 1 and 2. Complete one column for each spouse.

Item	You	Spouse
Date of birth		
Full retirement age (FRA)		
Credits earned (40 needed)		
Estimated benefit at 62		
Estimated benefit at FRA (approximately your PIA)		
Estimated benefit at 70		
Years of earnings on record (out of 35)		
Years with zero or very low earnings		
Earnings record checked? Errors found?		
Pension from work not covered by Social Security?		
my Social Security account set up?		
Statement downloaded (date)		

Earnings record corrections to make:

Year	Earnings shown	Correct earnings	Documents I have	Date SSA contacted

Year	Earnings shown	Correct earnings	Documents I have	Date SSA contacted

Worksheet B: Spousal Benefit Estimate

Use with Chapter 4.

Step	Amount
1. Higher earner's PIA (benefit at FRA)	
2. 50% of line 1 (maximum spousal benefit at the lower earner's FRA)	
3. Lower earner's own PIA	
4. Spousal "top-up" at FRA (line 2 minus line 3, if positive)	
5. Lower earner's age when claiming	
6. Reduction for claiming before FRA (from SSA or Chapter 4)	
7. Estimated total benefit for lower earner (own benefit plus top-up, after reductions)	
8. Earliest date the higher earner will have filed (required for spousal)	

Notes: Spousal benefits don't grow past the lower earner's FRA, so there's generally no benefit in the lower earner delaying a *spousal* benefit beyond FRA. The lower earner's *own* benefit does grow until 70.

Worksheet C: Survivor Benefit Planner

Use with Chapter 5. Complete for each spouse as the possible survivor.

Item	If husband/Spouse 1 dies first	If wife/Spouse 2 dies first
Deceased spouse's benefit (or PIA, if not yet claimed)		
Survivor's own benefit		
Survivor benefit at survivor's FRA		
Household income before the death (Social Security)		
Household income after the death (Social Security)		
Monthly drop in Social Security income		
Other income lost (pension, annuity, earnings)		
Expenses that would fall (estimate)		
Gap to cover from savings or insurance		

If you're widowed now: compare (1) taking the survivor benefit now and switching to your own benefit later, and (2) taking your own benefit now and switching to the survivor benefit at your survivor FRA. Write the expected lifetime income from each and confirm with SSA.

Option	Start now (monthly)	Switch at age	Switch to (monthly)	Estimated total to age 90
Survivor first, own later				
Own first, survivor later				
Survivor only				

Worksheet D: Claiming Strategy Comparison

Use with Chapters 3 and 9. Use your statement and SSA's online calculator, or a planning tool, to fill in at least three strategies.

Strategy	Spouse 1 claims at	Monthly	Spouse 2 claims at	Monthly	Combined at 70	Survivor monthly	Total to 85/90/95
A							
B							
C							
D							

Bridge needed from savings to delay (Strategy chosen minus Strategy A, before claiming):

Year	Age(s)	Social Security received	Spending needed	Withdrawal from savings

Strategy chosen: _____ **Reasons:** _____

Worksheet E: Trust Fund Stress Test

Use with Chapter 11.

Item	Amount
Expected annual Social Security (household, chosen strategy)	
Reduction to test (for example, 20% to 22%)	
Annual Social Security after reduction	
Annual shortfall	
Current planned portfolio withdrawal	
Withdrawal needed to cover shortfall	
New withdrawal rate	
Discretionary spending I could cut	
Other ways to cover the gap	

Conclusion: Does a reduction change my claiming decision? ☐ Yes ☐ No.
Why? _____

Worksheet F: Claiming Checklist

Use with Chapter 12.

Before you apply

☐ I've chosen my benefit start month and confirmed it with my strategy.

☐ I've checked my earnings record and corrected errors.

☐ I've reviewed survivor and spousal effects with my spouse.

☐ I've decided whether I want any retroactive benefits (only if past FRA).

☐ I've checked whether I'll be working and how the earnings test applies.

☐ I've decided on federal tax withholding (Form W-4V), if any.

☐ I've confirmed Medicare enrollment timing at 65.

☐ I've gathered my documents (birth certificate, W-2s, marriage and divorce records, military papers, bank information).

When you apply

☐ I applied about three months before my start month. Date: _____

☐ I stated my strategy clearly (for example, "survivor now, own benefit at 70") and asked SSA to note it.

☐ I wrote down the name of the SSA representative and the date.

☐ I set up direct deposit.

After you apply

☐ I received and reviewed my award letter. Amount matches my estimate? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ I noted my payment date.

☐ I made an advance designation of a representative payee.

☐ I put a reminder on my calendar for any future switch or action.

Worksheet G: Benefit Tax Estimator

Use with Chapter 8. For estimates only; use tax software or a tax professional for your actual return.

Line	Item	Amount
1	Total annual Social Security benefits (household)	
2	Half of line 1	
3	Other income: pensions, IRA withdrawals, wages, taxable interest, dividends, capital gains	
4	Tax-exempt interest	
5	Combined (provisional) income: line 2 + line 3 + line 4	
6	Threshold: $25,000 single / $32,000 married filing jointly	
7	Second threshold: $34,000 single / $44,000 married filing jointly	
8	Up to 50% of benefits taxable? (line 5 above line 6)	
9	Up to 85% of benefits taxable? (line 5 above line 7)	
10	Estimated taxable benefits (from tax software or IRS worksheet)	

Withholding choice (Form W-4V): ☐ None ☐ 7% ☐ 10% ☐ 12% ☐ 22% ☐ Pay estimated taxes instead

Worksheet H: Family Conversation Guide

Use with every chapter. Social Security decisions affect the whole family.

Question	Our answer
Who in our household is likely to live longest?	
What will the survivor's Social Security income be?	
Does the survivor know how to apply for survivor benefits?	
Who would manage benefits if one of us couldn't?	
Do we have children under 18 (or disabled adult children) who could qualify?	
Does either of us have an ex-spouse whose record matters?	
Where are our documents (birth, marriage, divorce, military)?	
Who should our family call at SSA, and where are our account details stored?	