

10 Things Veterans and Servicemembers Should Know About Social Security

Veterans and their families make up almost 40% of the adult Social Security beneficiary population. Here's what you should know about your benefits and eligibility.

- 1 **The contribution rate is the same for military or civilian wages.** Military members pay into Social Security at the same 6.2% rates as civilian employees do. The current rate includes military basic pay up to \$176,100. A Medicare tax is levied on 1.45% of all wages.
- 2 **1957: An important year to remember.** Since 1957, active-duty military service or training earnings have been covered under Social Security. If you served in the military prior to this and didn't pay Social Security taxes, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has added special credits to your earnings record that may help you qualify for benefits or increase your benefits. See page 2 for more coverage details.
- 3 **Qualifying veterans can receive both Social Security disability benefits and Veterans Affairs (VA) disability benefits.** While you're eligible to receive both at the same time, you must apply for each benefit separately. You may qualify for other benefits as well, such as Medicare and Tricare, depending on your circumstances.
- 4 **The Social Security Fairness Act may entitle you to additional benefits.** Effective January 2025, this new law eliminated some restrictions on Social Security eligibility for public employees who received pensions from non-Social Security-covered roles. Some veterans may now qualify for retroactive payments and higher monthly benefits.
- 5 **Disabling mental or physical health injuries may qualify for expedited processing.** Since 2014, the SSA has prioritized applications from those with 100% Permanent and Total (P&T) disability ratings from the VA. If you were wounded during active duty on or after October 1, 2001, you can apply for expedited application processing. To qualify, you must indicate on the application that your condition is a result of active duty.
- 6 **You can continue to work and get retirement benefits.** You can retire as early as age 62, but if you do, your Social Security benefits will be permanently reduced. If you continue to work, you can earn up to \$23,400 (if you're under your full retirement age) or up to \$62,160 (if you reach full retirement age the year you begin taking benefits) without impacting your benefits. Talk to your financial professional or tax adviser to determine your best course of action.
- 7 **Social Security also provides coverage for disabilities.** Many veterans with severe disabilities don't realize that they may be able to receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). If you're unable to perform substantial work because of your disability, you may wish to apply for benefits.
- 8 **You can apply for disability benefits while still receiving pay.** Active-duty status or receiving military pay doesn't necessarily prevent payment of SSDI benefits. Active-duty servicemembers who continue to receive pay while in the hospital or on medical leave should consider applying for disability benefits if they're unable to work due to a disabling condition.
- 9 **Your family may also be eligible to receive SSDI benefits.** Here are the eligibility requirements:
 - a. Your spouse, if they're age 62 or older.
 - b. Your spouse, if they're caring for a child of yours who's younger than age 16 or has a disability.
 - c. Your unmarried child (including an adopted child or, in some cases, a stepchild or grandchild) younger than 18 (or 19 if a full-time student).
 - d. Your unmarried child, age 18 or older, if they have a disability that started before age 22. The child's disability also must meet the definition of disability applied to adults.
- 10 **How do I apply?** To apply for your Social Security, SSDI, or SSI benefits, you may contact 1-800-772-1213 to request an appointment, or apply online at any time on the SSA's website (ssa.gov).

Does my service count toward my Social Security benefits?

While active-duty earnings have been covered since 1957, inactive-duty service in the armed forces reserves (such as weekend drills) has also been covered since 1988.

Under certain circumstances, special extra earnings for periods of active duty from 1957 through 2001 can also be credited to your Social Security earnings record. If you were on active duty:

1. From 1957 through 1967, the SSA will add the extra credits to your record when you apply for Social Security benefits.
2. From 1968 through 2001, you don't need to do anything to receive these extra credits; the credits were automatically added to your record.
3. After 2001, there are no special extra earnings credits for military service.

**Talk to your financial professional to help you
make the most of your Social Security benefits.**

All information sourced from ssa.gov.

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