

## Applying for a Social Security Number

### ➤ What is a Social Security Number (SSN)?

- Your nine-digit SSN is your link with Social Security. It helps the Social Security Administration (SSA) accurately record your wages or self-employment earnings.
- You need an SSN to get paid once you have a job and to pass a background check, which is required for some positions in the United States.

### ➤ Do I need a Social Security Number?

- **YES**, if:
  - You have been approved for **CPT** or **OPT**.
  - You have been approved for change of status to **H1B**.
  - You have been approved for **any other form** of work authorization.
- **NO**, if:
  - You have no form of work authorization.
  - You are applying for a Mass State ID or Drivers' License.
  - You are applying for an apartment or anything else that requires a background check.

### ➤ Can I get a Social Security Number without work authorization?

- No. You can instead get a **Rejection Letter** from the SSA.
  - This letter will spare you the trouble of explaining to other government and non-government offices why you don't have an SSN.

### ➤ How do I apply for a Social Security Number or a Rejection Letter?

1. Gather all of your identification documents. You will need:
  - a. Your current **I-20**, showing your **CPT** or **OPT** authorization, if applicable;
  - b. Your current, unexpired **passport**;
  - c. Your **visa**;
    - i. If you **changed status** in the U.S., take your **I-797C Approval Notice** as well.
  - d. Your **I-94**. If you don't have an I-94 in your passport, please visit <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html> to retrieve your electronic I-94
  - e. Proof of your **U.S. address**.
    - i. Any official document showing your name and your U.S. residential address.
    - ii. Your Cambridge College bill, your apartment lease, a phone/utility bill, etc.
2. **Visit the Social Security Administration** that is most convenient for you. You can do a search by postal zip code here: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>
3. **Wait** for your Social Security card to arrive. This takes 2-4 weeks, normally.
4. Keep the card safe at home. Do NOT keep it in your wallet. Do NOT send a copy to the International Office. **Memorize your number**, and keep the card safe!



## Applying for a Social Security Number

- **My Social Security card says “Valid only with DHS Authorization.” What does that mean?**
  - This means that your SSN is only active when you have work authorization.
  - You can keep the same SSN at all times. It will activate when you are approved for CPT, OPT, H1B, or any other employment authorization.
  
- **When can I apply for an SSN?**
  - You can apply for your SSN as soon as you are approved for work authorization.
  - Because your card will be notated “Valid only with DHS Authorization,” you can apply for and receive your SSN before your employment authorization begins.
    - If you are told otherwise by a Social Security Administration employee, please show them this paper. If they would like to contact the International Student Office, please ask them to call 617-873-0169. I will be happy to explain your situation to them.

### **Some helpful links:**

- Social Security Administration main page: <http://www.ssa.gov/>
- Social Security Administration office locator: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>
- Applying for an SSN as an F1 international student: <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10096.pdf>
- Applying for CPT with Cambridge College: <http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/curricular-practical-training-cpt>
- Applying for OPT with Cambridge College: <http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/optional-practical-training-opt>

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_