

Privacy Basics

Social Security Number Basics



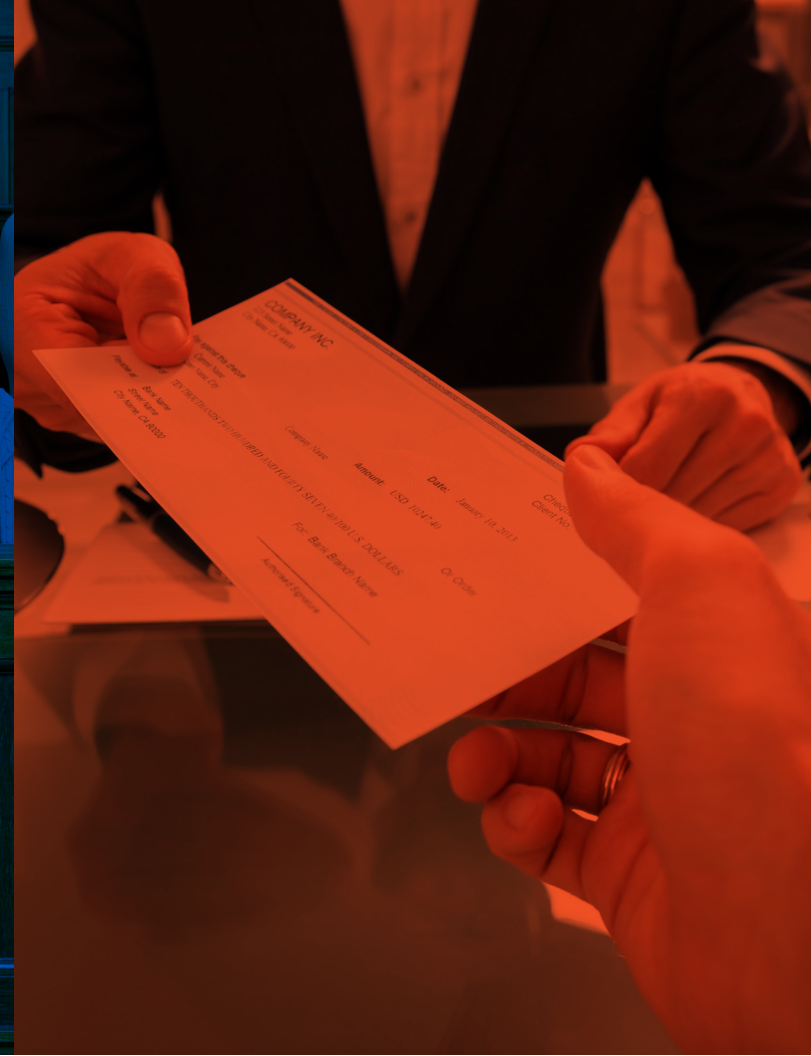
Privacy Rights
Clearinghouse

A **Social Security number** (SSN) is a nine digit identification number that has become a universal identifier for both the government and the private sector in the U.S.



Sections to Follow

- A Brief History
- Government Uses
- Business Uses



A Brief History

1936

Social Security Numbers Created

SSNs were created to keep track of U.S. workers' wages and determine Social Security eligibility and benefits.

1974

Congress passed the Privacy Act of 1974

The Privacy Act of 1974 requires all government agencies that request SSNs to disclose

- whether a person is required to provide one or if it is optional
- the authority under which it is being requested
- how it will be used

Government Uses

The federal government uses the SSN as a unique identifier for many purposes, including

- employment
- taxation
- benefits such as
 - ▶ student financial assistance
 - ▶ housing assistance
 - ▶ supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits
 - ▶ Medicare/Medicaid
- law enforcement

State and local government agencies (e.g. tax authorities, welfare offices, Departments of Motor Vehicles) also use SSNs for many purposes, including

- applying for public assistance
- issuing a birth certificate
- determining juror eligibility
- collecting child support
- identifying death records

Business Uses

SSNs are often used in the private sector to authenticate the identity of individuals in financial or other transactions.

There are some situations where businesses must collect SSNs. Federal law requires private businesses to collect them when there is a transaction involving Internal Revenue Service notification or subject to federal Customer Identification Program rules. Insurers of group health plans must also report subscribers and covered dependents' SSNs to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services since the information is used to coordinate Medicare payments with other insurance benefits.





**Millions
Impacted
by Data
Breaches**



**No
Comprehensive
Right to
Privacy**



**Little Trust
in those who
collect, use
and share
our data**




**Lack of
Power
to protect
our privacy**

**Our
Reality**

Protecting Privacy for All

Since 1992, Privacy Rights Clearinghouse has been **protecting privacy for all** by **empowering individuals** and **advocating for positive change.**



We hope that this resource has been useful. If you would like to support the development and creation of further educational materials, please consider donating to our organization.

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**Our
Mission**

The image is a collage of business meeting photos. The top half features a large blue curved graphic element. The middle section is dominated by a large orange curved graphic element. The bottom right corner contains contact information. The background consists of several photos of people in business attire sitting around a table, working on laptops and documents. The overall color palette is warm, with orange and blue being the primary colors used in the design.

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