



Social Security: Waiting Is Not Always Best Option

Starting at age 62 may be not only appropriate, but actually advantageous

If you're nearing retirement age, one of the most important financial decisions you'll make is when to start drawing your Social Security benefits. You can begin receiving Social Security as early as **age 62**, but doing so comes with a catch: your monthly benefit will be permanently reduced. On the other hand, if you wait until your **Full Retirement Age (FRA)** – which is between 66 and 67, depending on your birth year – you'll receive 100% of your earned benefit. Wait even longer, up to age 70, and you can earn **delayed retirement credits**, increasing your benefit by about 8% for each year you delay past your FRA.

While it's often financially advantageous to wait until FRA or even age 70, not everyone should. In fact, there are several legitimate, personal, and strategic reasons why **starting Social Security as soon as you're eligible at 62 might actually be the smarter move**.

5 Reasons You Might Want to Start Social Security at Age 62

1. You Need the Income

If you're no longer working and don't have other sufficient sources of income – like a pension, rental income, or retirement savings – Social Security may be your lifeline. Even though you'll get less per month by starting early, the immediate access to cash can help cover essential expenses like housing, food, and healthcare. For some people, that security outweighs the benefits of waiting.

2. You Have Health Issues or a Shorter Life Expectancy

Social Security is designed to pay you about the same total amount over your lifetime, whether you claim early or late – assuming you live an average lifespan. But if you're facing chronic health conditions or have a family history of shorter lifespans, starting early may allow you to collect more overall. In this case, taking benefits at 62 can mean getting the most out of the system before it's too late.

3. You Want to Reduce the Risk of Tapping Other Retirement Savings

Sometimes it makes sense to draw from Social Security early so you can leave other retirement assets, like 401(k)s or IRAs, untouched and growing. If your investments are in a volatile market or you're worried about outliving your savings, tapping into Social Security first may give your portfolio more time to recover or grow.

4. You Plan to Work Part-Time in Retirement

Yes, Social Security has earnings limits for those who claim before FRA – \$22,320 in 2024 – and your benefits may be temporarily reduced if you go over. However, those reductions aren't lost forever; they're essentially credited back to you once you reach FRA. So if you want to ease into retirement by working part-time, you can start Social Security at 62 and still end up receiving the full value over the long haul.

5. You Want to Maximize Spousal Benefits

If you're part of a married couple, your claiming strategy might impact your spouse's future benefits. For instance, if you're the lower earner and start claiming early, your spouse might be able to switch from a spousal benefit to their own higher benefit later. In some cases, beginning your benefits early can trigger spousal or dependent benefits for others in your family. This coordination can be particularly important in complex family situations.

A Personal Decision That Deserves Careful Thought

Deciding when to take Social Security isn't just a math problem – it's a life decision. It depends on your health, work plans, financial needs, family situation, and overall retirement strategy. While many advisors will point to the benefits of waiting until full retirement age (or later) to maximize your monthly benefit, real life doesn't always line up with ideal financial projections.

If you need income now, have health concerns, or want to preserve other assets, **starting Social Security at 62 may be not only appropriate but actually advantageous**. It's important to talk to a financial advisor and run the numbers based on your unique situation.

Ultimately, the right time to claim Social Security is the time that best aligns with your life, your needs, and your peace of mind.