Social Security Earnings Limit

2026 Cheat Sheet • Still Working While Collecting Benefits

2026 Annual Earnings Limits

Your Situation	2026 Limit	Reduction Rule
Under full retirement age for the entire year	**$24,480** (about $2,040/month)	$1 withheld for every **$2** earned over the limit
You reach full retirement age **during 2026**	**$65,160** (only counts earnings before the month you reach FRA)	$1 withheld for every **$3** earned over the limit
Full retirement age or older (starting the month you reach FRA)	**No limit**	You can earn any amount with no reduction

What Counts as Earnings?

- **Counts:** Wages from a job, net earnings from self-employment, bonuses, commissions, vacation pay.
- **Does NOT count:** Pensions, annuities, investment income, interest, dividends, capital gains, rental income (passive), veterans benefits, or other government benefits.

Key Things to Know

- **Withheld benefits are not lost forever.** When you reach full retirement age, SSA recalculates your benefit and permanently increases it to credit you for the months benefits were reduced or withheld.
- Report your estimated earnings to SSA early. This helps them withhold the correct amount and avoid large overpayments you later have to repay.
- The special monthly rule can help in the year you retire or start benefits. Ask SSA about it if you stop working mid-year.
- Working while receiving benefits can increase your future benefit amount because you continue paying Social Security taxes and may replace lower-earning years.

Quick Full Retirement Age (FRA) Reference

Year of Birth	Full Retirement Age
1943 – 1954	66
1955	66 and 2 months
1956	66 and 4 months
1957	66 and 6 months
1958	66 and 8 months
1959	66 and 10 months
1960 or later	67

Simple Example (under FRA all year):

Monthly benefit: $1,500 ($18,000/year)
You earn: $30,480 in 2026
Over the limit by: $6,000
Benefits withheld: $3,000 ($1 for every $2)
You receive: about $15,000 of your benefits that year

Those withheld months are later credited when you reach FRA.

What You Should Do

1. Know your full retirement age (use the chart above or SSA's calculator).
2. Estimate your 2026 earnings from work or self-employment.
3. Report the estimate to SSA (my Social Security account or call 1-800-772-1213).
4. Track earnings during the year and update SSA if they change significantly.
5. After you reach FRA, there is no longer an earnings test — work as much as you want.

Source: Social Security Administration (ssa.gov) — 2026 figures. This is a simplified overview for educational purposes. Rules can be complex; verify your specific situation with SSA or a trusted advisor. Limits are adjusted annually.