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Five Tips if Your Name Has Changed

If you were married or divorced and changed your name last year, be sure to notify the Social Security Administration before you file your taxes with the IRS. If the name on your tax return doesn't match SSA records, the IRS will flag it as an error and that may delay your refund.

Here are five tips for a person whose name has changed. They also apply if your dependent's name has changed.

1. If you have married and you're using your new spouse's last name or you've hyphenated your last name, notify the SSA. That way, the IRS computers can match your new name with your Social Security number.
2. If you were divorced and are now using your former last name, notify the SSA of your name change.
3. Letting the SSA know about a name change is easy. File Form SS-5, Application for a Social Security Card, at your local SSA office or by mail with proof of your legal name change.
4. You can get Form SS-5 on the SSA's website at www.ssa.gov, by calling 800-772-1213 or at local SSA offices. Your new card will have the same number as your former card but will show your new name.
5. If you adopted your new spouse's children and their names changed, you'll need to update their names with SSA too. For adopted children without SSNs, the parents can apply for an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number by filing Form W-7A, Application for Taxpayer Identification Number for Pending U.S. Adoptions, with the IRS. The ATIN is a temporary number used in place of an SSN on the tax return. Form W-7A is available on the IRS.gov website or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).