

Social Security

Substantial Gainful Activity

Automatic Determinations:	To be eligible for disability benefits, a person must be unable to engage in substantial gainful activity (SGA). A person who is earning more than a certain monthly amount (net of impairment-related work expenses) is ordinarily considered to be engaging in SGA. The amount of monthly earnings considered as SGA depends on the nature of a person's disability. The Social Security Act specifies a higher SGA amount for statutorily blind individuals; Federal regulations specify a lower SGA amount for non-blind individuals. Both SGA amounts generally change with changes in the national average wage index.
Determinations:	
SGA for blind	
SGA for non-blind disabled	
Wage-indexed amounts	

Amounts for 2018

The monthly SGA amount for statutorily blind individuals for 2018 is \$1970. For non-blind individuals, the monthly SGA amount for 2018 is \$1180. SGA for the blind does *not* apply to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, while SGA for the non-blind disabled applies to Social Security and SSI benefits. See historical series of SGA amounts below.

Trial work period

After a person becomes eligible for disability benefits, the person may attempt to return to the work force. As an incentive, we provide a *trial work period* in which a beneficiary may have earnings and still collect benefits.

Monthly substantial gainful activity amounts by disability type

Year	Blind	Non-blind	Year	Blind	Non-blind	Year	Blind	Non-blind
1975	\$200	\$200	1990	\$780	\$500	2005	\$1,380	\$830
1976	230	230	1991	810	500	2006	1,450	860
1977	240	240	1992	850	500	2007	1,500	900
1978	334	260	1993	880	500	2008	1,570	940
1979	375	280	1994	930	500	2009	1,640	980
1980	417	300	1995	940	500	2010	1,640	1,000
1981	459	300	1996	960	500	2011	1,640	1,000

1982	500	300	1997	1,000	500	2012	1,690	1,010
1983	550	300	1998	1,050	500	2013	1,740	1,040
1984	580	300	1999	1,110	700 ^a	2014	1,800	1,070
1985	610	300	2000	1,170	700	2015	1,820	1,090
1986	650	300	2001	1,240	740	2016	1,820	1,130
1987	680	300	2002	1,300	780	2017	1,950	1,170
1988	700	300	2003	1,330	800	2018	1,970	1,180
1989	740	300	2004	1,350	810			

^a \$500 amount applied in the first half of 1999.