

Trial Work Period (TWP)

2026 Fact Sheet on Title II Self-Employment Work Incentives

How does Social Security (SSA) count self-employment income?

Only earned income can affect Title II disability benefits, so SSA must first determine if your work activity counts as self-employment (earned income) or a hobby (unearned income). If SSA decides you have self-employment income, they will only count your **Net Earnings from Self-Employment (NESE)**. NESE is your gross business income minus your business expenses multiplied by 0.9235. SSA allows you to deduct any business expense that is allowed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) & reported on your federal income tax return.

What is the Trial Work Period (TWP)?

The Trial Work Period, sometimes known as the “TWP,” lets you test your ability to work to your fullest potential. The TWP lets you work with no limit on how much you earn for 9 months; you can earn as much as you can and still receive your full Title II payment.

Trial Work Period (9 months)

Receive full cash benefit while working

How does the TWP work?

The 9 TWP months don't have to be used a row. In fact, you can use them over a 60-month (5-year) rolling period. In 2026, a TWP month happens any month you have NESE of **\$1,210 or more** **OR** spend **80 hours** or more engaged in your business. The earnings amount for the TWP usually changes each year.

Do I need to notify Social Security (SSA) that I'm working?

Yes. You must report your NESE and the total number of hours worked to SSA *every month you work until your TWP ends*. You also want to give SSA a copy of your completed federal income tax return each year. Once your TWP is over, you do not have to track the hours you work each month, but you need to continue to track and report your NESE to Social Security.

What happens after the TWP ends?

At the end of your TWP, Social Security may contact you to review your work activity. This is called a Continuing Disability Review. When your TWP is over, you will enter a 3-year Extended Period of Eligibility (for details see the fact sheet about this work incentive).



Vocational Services

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