



# Roth IRAs



# The Roth IRA

*2017 and 2018*

Questions & Answers

## **What is a Roth Individual Retirement Account (Roth IRA)?**

A Roth IRA is a type of tax-preferred savings and investment account authorized by Internal Revenue Code section 408A. The Roth IRA allows you to accumulate assets for retirement purposes and for other purposes.

## **What are the tax benefits of a Roth IRA?**

A Roth IRA will produce tax-free income if certain rules are met. You or your beneficiary(ies) will not be required to include in income, for income tax purposes, a distribution paid from a Roth IRA, whether it be the return of a contribution or the account's earnings, if certain rules are met. In some cases, you may be eligible to claim a tax credit because of your Roth IRA contribution.

## **What is the basic concept of a Roth IRA, and what are the associated tax benefits?**

If you are eligible, you may make contributions, within limits, to the Roth IRA. You make these contributions with after-tax dollars. The earnings realized by the Roth IRA are not presently taxed, and if certain distribution rules are met, will never be taxed. For example, if you are age 42 on January 1, 2017, and you contribute \$1,000 a year for 34 years (2017-2050) to a Roth IRA, then your contributions of \$34,000 would accumulate to \$110,434.88 as of December 31, 2050, if an earnings rate of 6% compounded annually were realized. You and your beneficiary(ies) would not pay any federal income tax on the contribution amount of \$34,000 when distributed, because you cannot claim a tax deduction for your contributions. However, the great tax benefit to be realized from a Roth IRA is that you and your beneficiary(ies) will not have to include in your taxable income the earnings of \$76,434.88 (and subsequent future earnings) when distributed to you or your beneficiary(ies), as long as the distributions are qualified distributions, as defined later.

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## **THE CONTRIBUTION RULES**

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### **When do I have to establish the Roth IRA?**

You have until the due date (without extensions) for filing your federal income tax return, normally April 15, to establish and fund your Roth IRA for the previous tax year.

## **Am I eligible to make an annual contribution to a Roth IRA?**

You are eligible if you satisfy the following two requirements: (1) you have earned income or compensation; and (2) you meet certain income limitations. Be aware that you are eligible to make contributions to a Roth IRA even though you are age 70½ or older. For a given year, you may be ineligible to contribute to a Roth IRA, but still be eligible to contribute to a traditional IRA .

If your income (and your spouse's income, if you are married) is too high, you will not be eligible to make a contribution to a Roth IRA. For 2017, if you are single, you become ineligible when your adjusted gross income is \$133,000 or greater. If you are married, and file a joint return, you become ineligible when the combined adjusted gross income (AGI) of you and your spouse is \$196,000 or greater. If you are married and file a separate return, you become ineligible when your adjusted gross income is \$10,000 or greater.

## **May I contribute to a Roth IRA after age 70½?**

Yes, no age limit is imposed for Roth IRA contributions.

## **How much am I eligible to contribute to my Roth IRA for the 2017 and 2018 tax years if I will NOT be at least age 50 as of December 31?**

For 2017 and 2018 you are eligible to contribute the lesser of 100% of your compensation, or \$5,500, as reduced by (1) application of the special income and filing status limitation rule and (2) any amount you contributed to your traditional IRA for the same tax year.

## **How much am I eligible to contribute to my Roth IRA for the 2017 and 2018 tax years if I will be at least age 50 as of December 31?**

For 2017 and 2018 you are also eligible to contribute the lesser of 100% of your compensation, or \$6,500, as reduced by (1) application of the special income and filing status limitation rule and (2) any amount you contributed to your traditional IRA for the same tax year.

## **How is my allowable contribution to a Roth IRA calculated?**

There is a special formula which must be used, as described in the "Roth IRA Contribution Chart." The formula is as follows:

$$\frac{\text{AGI-Threshold Level}}{\text{Phaseout Level} - \text{Threshold Level}} = \text{Ineligible Contribution \%}$$

<u>2017 Limits</u> <u>Tax-Filing Status</u>	<u>Threshold Level</u>	<u>Phaseout Level</u>
Single	\$118,000	\$133,000
Married/Joint Return	\$186,000	\$196,000
Married/Separate Return	\$0	\$10,000
<u>2018 Limits</u> <u>Tax-Filing Status</u>	<u>Threshold Level</u>	<u>Phaseout Level</u>
Single	\$120,000	\$135,000
Married/Joint Return	\$189,000	\$199,000
Married/Separate Return	\$0	\$10,000

The result is the percentage which cannot be contributed to the Roth IRA. You must then apply this percentage to the maximum contribution amount and then subtract this amount from the allowed contribution amount to get the amount which you can contribute.

**Example** — Bob and Lynn Brown have adjusted gross income of \$190,000 in 2017, and file a joint tax return. Both are 47 years old. They wish to make contributions to Roth IRAs. How much can each contribute to a Roth IRA? Using the formula for a married taxpayer, filing jointly:

Step 1  $\$190,000 - \$186,000 / \$10,000$

Step 2  $\$4,000 \div \$10,000 = .4$

Step 3  $5,500 \times .4 = \$2,200$  *Ineligible Amount*

**(Note: \$5,500 is used, not \$10,000)**

Step 4  $\$5,500 - \$2,200 = \$3,300$  *Eligible Amount*

This formula must be calculated separately for each spouse, but is based on their combined income. Bob and Lynn could each contribute up to \$3,300 to a Roth IRA in 2017, for a total contribution amount of \$6,600.

## **May my spouse or I use the spousal IRA contribution rules to make a contribution to our respective Roth IRA for 2017 and/or 2018?**

Yes. One of you will be eligible to make a spousal contribution to a Roth IRA if the following rules are satisfied:

- You and your spouse must each have your own Roth IRA.
- You must be married as of the end of the tax year (i.e. December 31).
- You must file a joint income tax return.
- You must have compensation includible in gross income which is less than that of your spouse.

Your annual Roth IRA contribution will be limited to the

lesser of (1) \$5,500/\$6,500, as applicable; or (2) the sum of your compensation which is includible in gross income for such year, plus the compensation of your spouse, as reduced by your spouse's contribution to his or her own traditional IRA and Roth IRA.

## To what extent may I be entitled to a tax credit for my Roth IRA contributions?

You may be eligible for a tax credit for contributions you make to your traditional and/or Roth IRA. A formula is used to calculate your credit. Your credit may vary from \$1 to \$1,000, depending on the amount you contribute to your Roth IRA, your filing status and your modified adjusted gross income. Because of the complexity of this credit, you will want to review IRS Publication 590-A for a complete explanation.

## The following Charts summarize the special income and filing status rules for 2017 and 2018:

### **Roth IRA Contribution Chart for 2017**

Amount of AGI and Filing Status

#### **Single, Head of Household or Qualifying Widow(er)**

Below \$118,000	Entitled to full contribution amount
\$118,000-\$132,999.99	Entitled to prorated contribution amount—use special formula*
\$133,000 or more	No contribution permissible

\*Explanation of special formula. Multiply the permissible contribution by the following ratio: amount of adjusted gross income in excess of \$118,000/\$15,000. This will give you a ratio that determines the amount you cannot contribute. Round to the lowest \$10.00.

#### **Married Filing Jointly**

Below \$186,000	Entitled to full contribution amount.
\$186,000-195,999.99	Entitled to prorated contribution amount—use special formula.*
\$196,000 or more	No contribution permissible.

\*Explanation of special formula. Multiply the permissible contribution by the following ratio: amount of adjusted gross income in excess of \$186,000/\$10,000. This will give you a ratio that determines the amount you cannot contribute. Round to the lowest \$10.00.

#### **Married Filing Separate Returns**

\$0-\$9,999.99	Entitled to prorated contribution amount—use special formula*
\$10,000 or more	No contribution permissible

\*Explanation of special formula. Multiply the permissible contribution by the following ratio: amount of adjusted gross income in excess of \$0/\$10,000. This will give you a ratio that determines the amount you cannot contribute. Round to the lowest \$10.00.

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## ROLLOVER CONTRIBUTIONS

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### **If I receive a distribution from one Roth IRA, may I roll over the funds to a second Roth IRA?**

Yes, if two rules are met. A rollover from a Roth IRA is a tax-free distribution to you of cash or other assets that you contribute to another Roth IRA or the same Roth IRA in order to continue the tax benefits. You must comply with two rules. First, you must complete your rollover within 60 days. Secondly, you must comply with the rule limiting a person to rolling over only one distribution within a 12-month period (365 days).

### **May I roll over or directly roll over funds from a qualified plan, a governmental 457 plan, or a section 403(b) plan to a Roth IRA?**

Such rollovers are now permitted. The sponsor is required to furnish you with distribution and rollover information so you can make an informed decision how you want to structure your distributions and/or direct rollovers.

#### **Roth IRA Contribution Chart for 2018**

Amount of AGI and Filing Status

##### **Single, Head of Household or Qualifying Widow(er)**

Below \$120,000	Entitled to full contribution amount
\$120,000-\$134,999.99	Entitled to prorated contribution amount—use special formula*
\$135,000 or more	No contribution permissible

\*Explanation of special formula. Multiply the permissible contribution by the following ratio: amount of adjusted gross income in excess of \$120,000/\$15,000. This will give you a ratio that determines the amount you cannot contribute. Round to the lowest \$10.00.

##### **Married Filing Jointly**

Below \$189,000	Entitled to full contribution amount.
\$189,000-198,999.99	Entitled to prorated contribution amount—use special formula.*
\$199,000 or more	No contribution permissible.

\*Explanation of special formula. Multiply the permissible contribution by the following ratio: amount of adjusted gross income in excess of \$189,000/\$10,000. This will give you a ratio that determines the amount you cannot contribute. Round to the lowest \$10.00.

##### **Married Filing Separate Returns**

\$0-\$9,999.99	Entitled to prorated contribution amount—use special formula*
\$10,000 or more	No contribution permissible

\*Explanation of special formula. Multiply the permissible contribution by the following ratio: amount of adjusted gross income in excess of \$0/\$10,000. This will give you a ratio that determines the amount you cannot contribute. Round to the lowest \$10.00.

## **May I convert part or all of my traditional IRA to a Roth IRA?**

Anyone having a traditional IRA is eligible to convert funds from their traditional IRA to a Roth IRA. An individual's RMD for the current year is ineligible to be converted.

You can convert amounts from your traditional IRA to a Roth IRA by using any of the following three methods. The first method is the standard rollover. You can receive a distribution from a traditional IRA and roll it over (contribute it) to a Roth IRA within 60 days of the distribution. The second method is a trustee-to-trustee transfer. The third method is you direct the custodian/trustee of your traditional IRA to transfer an amount from your traditional IRA to your Roth IRA.

Whatever conversion method is used, the custodian/trustee of the traditional IRA will prepare a Form 1099-R to report the distribution, and the custodian/trustee of the Roth IRA will prepare a 5498 to report the conversion contribution.

## **Why might I want to convert my traditional IRA to a Roth IRA?**

You may find it advantageous to incur the tax consequences of a present distribution in order to qualify to earn the right to have no taxation when the earnings are ultimately distributed from the Roth IRA.

## **What are the tax consequences of converting funds from a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA?**

In general, the amount distributed to you from your traditional IRA will be included in your income in the year of receipt and will be subject to income taxes for that year. The 10% premature distribution excise tax, however, will not be owed, even if you are younger than age 59½. No income tax is paid with respect to that portion of your conversion comprised of basis (i.e. nontaxable funds.) The tax rules permit you to undo a conversion contribution for any reason. You have until April 15 of the following year (plus extensions) to recharacterize some or all of your conversion, this allows you to lessen the tax amount to be paid.

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## THE WITHDRAWAL RULES

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### **When may I start to withdraw money or assets from my Roth IRA?**

You may begin withdrawals at any time. However, you will want to understand the income tax consequences.

### **Must I commence required minimum distributions from my Roth IRA at age 70½?**

No. The required minimum distribution rules for living accountholders (age 70½ or older) do not apply to distributions from a Roth IRA.

### **What distributions from a Roth IRA will be tax free?**

“Qualified distributions” will be tax free. To be a qualified distribution, the distribution must occur after you have met the five-year holding requirement, and the distribution is made to you (1) after you have attained age 59½, (2) after you have become disabled, (3) because of a first-time home purchase, or (4) to your beneficiary after your death.

### **When will I have met the 5-year rule?**

The five-year period is considered to start on January 1 of the year for which the first contribution to a Roth IRA is made. All Roth IRA contributions, including rollovers, are aggregated for purposes of satisfying the 5-year rule. Exception: a distinct five-year period applies to inherited Roth IRAs.

However, for IRS reporting purposes, the Roth IRA custodian/trustee determines if the 5-year period has been met based on the contributions made to it and does not consider contributions you made at another Roth IRA custodian/trustee. Therefore, your Form 1099-R may indicate your distribution was nonqualified, when in fact, it was qualified. You will explain on your tax return that your distribution is tax-free as you met the 5-year requirement because of other Roth IRA contributions.

### **Does the law define the order for distributions?**

Yes. The law mandates the following order for distributions: (1) from regular/annual contributions; (2) from conversion contributions on a first-in-first-out basis and (3) from earn-



ings. The order is determined as of the end of the taxable year, and each category must be exhausted before the next is used. With respect to a conversion contribution, it is treated as being made first from the portion, if any, that was includible in gross income as a result of the conversion.

### **What Roth IRA distributions will be taxed?**

To the extent that a nonqualified distribution is the return of the earnings on your contributions, you will need to include this distribution amount in income and pay the related tax.

### **May I withdraw the basis in my Roth IRA at any time without tax or penalty?**

Normally, yes. Even though you may not have met the 5-year requirement, you may withdraw your basis at any time without being taxed on the amount. Because of the tax-ordering rules, the first funds distributed from a Roth IRA are your basis. Because a Roth IRA is funded with after-tax dollars, you will not be taxed again on this amount.

It is possible that a financial institution may impose an early-withdrawal penalty for a Roth IRA. Such penalty would be indicated in the information you received when you established the Roth IRA.

### **May a Roth IRA be used to save for a down payment on a first home?**

Yes. A Roth IRA would be an excellent savings vehicle to accumulate funds to purchase a first home.

### **Are there advantages to funding a Roth IRA instead of placing funds in a normal savings account?**

As with a normal savings account, you are allowed to remove your basis from a Roth IRA tax free at any time. However, with a normal savings account, you will have to include any interest earned in your taxable income for the year (whether you withdraw it or not). The interest in a Roth IRA grows tax free, and will never be taxed if it is withdrawn as a qualified distribution.

### **Will the 10% additional tax ever be assessed?**

Yes. If you are not yet age 59½ (and none of the other exceptions apply at the time you withdraw funds from your Roth IRA), then you will be liable to pay the 10% additional tax if you withdraw income and it is taxable. You may also have to pay the 10% additional tax if you do a conversion

before attaining age 59½ and then you take a subsequent distribution within a 5-year period when none of the exceptions to the 10% tax apply. A separate 5-year period applies to each conversion and commences on the date of the distribution.

### **Are there exceptions to the age 59½ rule?**

Yes. You may qualify for an exception if you are in one of the following situations. (1) You have unreimbursed medical expenses that are more than 10.0% of your adjusted gross income. (2) You are disabled. (3) You are the beneficiary of a deceased Roth IRA owner. (4) The distributions are not more than your qualified higher education expenses. (5) You use the distributions to buy, build, or rebuild a first home. (6) The distribution is of contributions returned before the due date of your tax return. (7) The distribution is due to an IRS levy. Refer to IRS Publication 590-B for more information and additional exceptions.

### **Are there rules which allow me to correct or undo a Roth contribution?**

Yes. You may correct a Roth contribution by either withdrawing it according to the withdrawal of excess contribution rules or by recharacterizing your Roth contribution according to special recharacterization rules.

### **What happens to my Roth IRA after I die?**

If your spouse is your beneficiary, most likely he or she will elect to treat your Roth IRA as his or her own Roth IRA since he or she is not required to take a distribution while alive. However, if you have designated one or more nonspouse beneficiaries, then he or she generally must commence taking required distributions over his or her life expectancy by December 31 of the year after you die. As long as the 5-year rule has been met by either you or your beneficiary, a distribution to your beneficiary is tax-free.

Again, your Roth IRA will generate tax-free income for your beneficiary(ies) for their life span. This assumes the federal income tax law is never changed to impose an income tax on the earnings of your Roth IRA. Your beneficiary most likely will wish to withdraw only the required minimum amount for each year commencing with the year after you die. Except in very rare situations, you do not wish to designate your estate as the beneficiary of your Roth IRA as a special tax rule requires the Roth IRA to be closed under the 5-year rule and the right to earn tax-free income no longer applies.