

Answers to Your Questions



Find the answers to lead you in the right direction before saving with a Coverdell ESA.

Are you interested in opening a Coverdell education savings account (ESA) for a child but have some questions? These questions and answers may help you make a more informed decision on whether an ESA is the right choice.

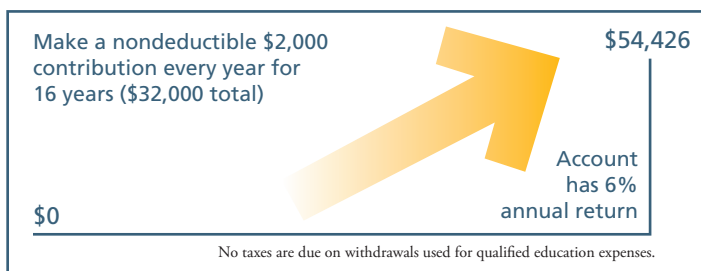
Learn more today.

Q. What is a Coverdell education savings account (ESA)?

A. An ESA can help you save for a child's education expenses—such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, equipment, and, in some cases, room and board.

Q. How does an ESA work?

A. With an ESA, you make nondeductible contributions that may provide for tax-free withdrawals—including earnings—down the road. Here's a look at how your money can grow in an ESA.



Q. Who can contribute to an ESA?

A. Anyone—family member or nonfamily member—can contribute to a child's ESA, as long as the contributor's modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) falls below or within the applicable income limits. (See below for the income eligibility limits.) If your MAGI falls below the lower limit, you may contribute up to the \$2,000 maximum per child. If it falls within the limits, you may contribute a portion of the maximum annual contribution (use IRS formula to calculate). If your income exceeds the limits, you cannot contribute to an ESA for that year.

MAGI Limits

Single Filer:	\$95,000–\$110,000
Married, Joint Filer:	\$190,000–\$220,000

Businesses also may contribute and are not subject to the MAGI limits. You may want to seek competent tax advice before contributing to or opening an ESA.

Q. How much can I contribute to an ESA?

A. Depending on your MAGI, you may be able to contribute up to \$2,000 per child. For example, if you choose to contribute to the ESAs of three children and you are eligible to give the full contribution amount, you could contribute \$6,000 total (\$2,000 to each child). Each child may receive no more than \$2,000 total per year in ESA contributions. Thus, if several individuals are making ESA contributions for the same child, a coordinated effort will ensure that the total contributions a child receives in one year do not result in an excess contribution.

Q. What is the deadline for making ESA contributions each year?

A. You have until the due date for filing your federal income tax return for the year to contribute to an ESA. For most individuals, this is April 15.

Q. How long can I contribute to a child’s ESA?

A. You can make contributions to a child’s ESA until she reaches age 18.*

Q. If I contribute to an ESA, can I still contribute to a Traditional or Roth IRA?

A. ESA contributions do not affect your ability to make Traditional or Roth IRA contributions.

Q. Who controls the ESA?

A. Every ESA must have a “responsible individual” assigned to oversee the account. This person directs the investments within the account, decides when to withdraw money, and decides if and when to transfer or roll over the assets to another eligible family member’s ESA. Generally, the “responsible individual” is a parent or legal guardian of the child. The child may serve as the responsible individual after becoming an adult.

Q. Can ESA assets be moved to another ESA?

A. Yes. Assets can be transferred or rolled over from one ESA to another ESA for the same child or an eligible family member of the child. There is no time limit for executing a transfer, but rollovers between ESAs must be completed within 60 days. Keep in mind that only one rollover is permitted every 12 months.

Q. Who is considered an eligible family member for purposes of a transfer or rollover?

A. An eligible family member must be under the age of 30* and either the child’s spouse, sibling, niece, nephew, parent, aunt, uncle, child, grandchild, in-law, or first cousin.

Q. Can retirement plan assets be rolled over to an ESA?

A. No. Assets from IRAs, employer-sponsored retirement plans, and even qualified tuition programs (QTPs or state 529 plans) cannot be rolled over to ESAs. Military death benefit gratuities or Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance payments, however, may be rolled over to an ESA if completed within one year from receipt.

Q. Can ESA assets be moved to a QTP?

A. Yes. ESA distributions are tax-free if contributed to a QTP for the same child.

Q. When can ESA money be accessed?

A. The responsible individual can withdraw money from the child’s ESA at any time, without restriction. The amount withdrawn is tax-free if used for qualified education expenses.

Q. What education expenses are considered to be qualified?

A. Qualified expenses are outlined in the chart below.

	Eligible Expenses	Condition for Qualification
Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition and fees Books, supplies, and equipment 	Must be <i>required</i> for enrollment (no minimum enrollment standard)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Room and board (subject to limits) 	Student must be enrolled at least half-time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer technology, equipment, Internet access, and related services 	Must be used by student during any of the years the student is enrolled
Elementary and Secondary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition and fees Books, supplies, and equipment Academic tutoring Special needs services 	Must be <i>incurred</i> in connection with enrollment or attendance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Room and board Uniforms Transportation Supplementary items (including extended day programs) 	Must be <i>required</i> or provided by school in connection with attendance or enrollment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer technology, equipment, Internet access, and related services 	Must be used by student and student’s family during any of the years the student is enrolled

*The age 18 and age 30 limits do not apply to special needs individuals.

Q. What if amounts withdrawn from an ESA are not used to pay for qualified education expenses?

A. Any amounts withdrawn that are not used to pay for the child's qualified education expenses may be subject to tax and penalty.

Q. What if a child earns an academic scholarship and tuition is waived?

A. The amount of scholarship money a child receives is deducted from the allowable expenses for the ESA. For example, if qualified expenses total \$6,000 and a child receives a scholarship for \$4,000, you can take a \$2,000 qualified withdrawal from the ESA. Remember that unused funds can always be rolled over to the ESA of an eligible family member.

Q. How does contributing to an ESA affect other education savings incentives?

A. Contributions can be made on behalf of the same child to both an ESA and a QTP. A child also can receive tax-free distributions from an ESA in the same year he claims the lifetime learning or American opportunity tax credits, but the same expenses cannot be used for more than one of these tax benefits.

Q. Don't Traditional and Roth IRAs allow distributions for education expenses?

A. Traditional and Roth IRAs do offer penalty-free withdrawals for qualified *higher* education expenses, but you still may need to pay taxes on those withdrawals. In contrast, withdrawals from a Coverdell ESA are both tax-free and penalty-free if used for qualified elementary, secondary, or higher education expenses.

Q. What happens to the ESA if a child doesn't use the money?

A. If a child does not use the money in her ESA before she turns 30,* the unused portion can be transferred or rolled over to another eligible family member's ESA. If money remains in the ESA when the child turns 30, the ESA will be distributed and taxable to the child.

For More Information

Talk to us—we'll be glad to provide you with more information on Coverdell education savings accounts.

**The age 18 and age 30 limits do not apply to special needs individuals.*