

Roth IRAs are different than traditional IRAs in that the contributions are never deductible. However, if the Roth IRA is held long enough, the distributions are tax free. That means you may never have to pay tax on the earnings. Annual contributions are not the only way to invest in a Roth IRA. You can also roll over eligible distributions from a traditional IRA. Such rollovers are also called conversions. The rules for rollover contributions are different from the rules for making regular contributions to a Roth account.

Who can make conversion contributions?

All individuals, no matter filing status or modified adjusted gross income (MAGI), are eligible to roll over traditional IRAs and certain employer accounts to Roth IRAs.

How much can I convert into a Roth IRA?

There is no limit on the amount that you can roll over into a Roth IRA. The rollover can come from one or more accounts and contain both deductible and nondeductible contributions. A partial rollover from a traditional IRA is also allowed.

When can I make a conversion to a Roth IRA?

There is no “grace period” in which to make a rollover. Unlike Roth IRA contributions that can be made up until the due date of the return, a rollover cannot be made retroactive. Therefore, the amounts

rolled from a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA during the tax year are accounted for on the tax return for that tax year.

The transferred amount must include the earnings on the amount transferred.

For purposes of the one-rollover-per-year rule for IRAs, a rollover from a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA does not count as a rollover.

How are conversion contributions to a Roth IRA taxed?

Deductible contributions from traditional IRAs that are rolled into a Roth IRA are generally taxed in the same year that the rollover occurs. The nondeductible amounts are rolled over into a Roth IRA tax free.

If you convert a combination of deductible and nondeductible amounts into the Roth IRA, you’ll need to determine how much of the amount rolled over will be included as income. This calculation is similar to that used for determining the taxable amount of an IRA distribution comprised of deductible and nondeductible contributions.

Caution: If nondeductible IRAs are rolled over into a Roth IRA and you also own other IRA accounts that will not be rolled over, special basis allocation rules apply. These basis allocation rules require the basis of the IRAs to be allocated among all IRAs based on fair market value. The results of this special calculation can cause significantly higher taxes on the rollover transaction.

When can I take distributions and how are they taxed?

You can take distributions at any time, but they are subject to different tax consequences. Roth IRAs are never subject to the age 70½ minimum distribution requirements. All of the normal penalty exceptions that apply to traditional IRA distributions also apply to Roth distributions.

When you take a distribution, regular contributions you made to the Roth are deemed to come out first, followed by conversion amounts in the order contributed. Earnings are distributed last. If the distribution is from a conversion that includes deductible and nondeductible amounts, the deductible amounts that were included in income are considered to be distributed first.

Distributions you take from a Roth IRA five years after the account was funded and after you reach age 59½, become disabled, die or become a first-time homebuyer (up to \$10,000), are tax free and penalty free. For conversions, the five years is measured from the year of the conversion contribution.

For distributions that are considered made from deductible conversion contributions and earnings not meeting the five-year or age 59½ tests, further analysis is needed to determine the taxability and penalty potential. Consult your tax advisor to determine how these amounts may be taxed.

Distributions that are considered made from regular contributions and nondeductible conversion

contributions are tax free and penalty free, regardless of your age or any other circumstance.

If the beneficiary of your Roth account is an individual other than your spouse, he or she must take a distribution of the balance in the account by the end of the fifth year containing the anniversary of your death, or over his or her life expectancy.

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Conversions to a Roth IRA

Tax Advantage or Disadvantage

