

Roth 403(b)

Mennonite Retirement Trust



Employers can offer 403(b) plan participants the ability to make Roth 403(b) contributions. Because your employer is offering this choice, Roth contributions could play an important role in maximizing your retirement income.

What is a Roth 403(b)?

A Roth 403(b) is simply an option within an existing 403(b) plan that allows you to make contributions to your retirement plan on an after-tax basis, just like Roth IRA contributions. Although you will not see any pretax benefits, a Roth 403(b) allows you to withdraw your funds tax-free upon retirement if certain conditions are met.

Who can contribute?

Anyone who is eligible to participate in a 403(b) plan can make Roth contributions, regardless of salary level.

How much can I contribute?

The maximum amount you can contribute is \$19,000. If you are age 50 or older, you can make “catch-up” contributions up to an additional \$6,000. These amounts may be adjusted each year. You can choose to have all of your personal contributions placed in a Roth 403(b) account, in a traditional 403(b) account, or divided between the two.

Can I also contribute to a Roth IRA?

Yes. Your participation in a Roth 403(b) plan has no impact on your ability to contribute to a Roth IRA (assuming you meet the Roth IRA

income limits). The maximum amount you can contribute to a Roth IRA for the 2019 tax year is \$6,000 (or \$7,000 if you are age 50 or older). These amounts may be adjusted each year.

Should I make pretax or Roth 403(b) contributions?

If you choose to make pretax contributions to a traditional 403(b), you will have more take-home pay today because less taxes are withheld. But, your contributions and investment earnings are fully taxable when you withdraw them in retirement.

On the other hand, Roth 403(b) contributions are made after taxes, meaning you will reduce your take-home pay by the amount of taxes withheld. However, you will not pay taxes on your contributions and investment earnings upon withdrawal when you reach retirement.

The best option for you depends on your personal situation. In general, Roth 403(b) contributions will most likely benefit those who expect their tax rates to be higher upon retirement, individuals interested in leaving tax-free money to their heirs, and those who would prefer to have tax-free withdrawals at retirement.

Are distributions really tax free?

Because your Roth 403(b) contributions are made on an after-tax basis, they are always free from federal income tax when withdrawn from the plan. But the investment earnings on your Roth contributions are tax free only if you meet the requirements for a “qualified distribution.”

In general, a distribution is considered a qualified distribution only if it is taken at least five years after your first Roth 403(b) contribution, and after you reach age 59½, become disabled, or pass away.

If you withdraw any money from your account and these requirements aren't met, the earnings will be taxable and will be subject to a 10 percent early distribution penalty, unless you are 59½ or older, or another exception applies.

You can generally avoid taxation by rolling your distribution over into a Roth IRA or another employer's 403(b) plan, if that plan accepts Roth rollovers. State income tax treatment of Roth 403(b) contributions may differ from the federal rules.

What about employer contributions?

Employers cannot contribute to a Roth account. Employer contributions are always made on a pretax basis, even if they match your Roth contributions – meaning employer contributions and investment earnings are not taxed until you withdraw them from your plan.

What else do I need to know?

Like traditional 403(b) contributions, your Roth 403(b) contributions can be withdrawn if you incur a hardship prior to terminating employment, become disabled, or pass away. However, your investment earnings cannot be withdrawn.

Also, unlike Roth IRAs, you must begin taking distributions from your Roth 403(b) plan after you reach age 70½ or retire, whichever is later. Keep in mind, though, that you can generally rollover your Roth 403(b) money into a Roth IRA if you don't need or want the distributions.

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