

2021 Standard Deductions, Exemptions & Credits

Standard Deductions. The standard deduction for singles and married persons filing separate returns is \$12,550, up from \$12,400 in 2020. The deduction for married couples filing jointly and surviving spouses is \$25,100, up from \$24,800 in 2020. The deduction for head of household is \$18,800, up from \$18,650 in 2020.

FILING STATUS	STANDARD DEDUCTION AMOUNT
Single	\$12,550
Married Filing Jointly & Surviving Spouse	\$25,100
Married Filing Separately	\$12,550
Head of Household	\$18,800

Itemized Deductions. For high-income taxpayers who itemize their deductions, the Pease limitations, named after former Representative Don Pease (D-OH), previously capped or phased out certain deductions. The Pease limitation was eliminated as of the 2018 tax year, but will return after 2025 when the Tax Jobs and Cuts Act of 2017 expires, unless Congress takes action to adjust that expiration.

Personal Exemptions. There will be no personal exemption amounts for 2021. The personal exemption was eliminated as of the 2018 tax year, but will return after 2025 when the Tax Jobs and Cuts Act of 2017 expires, unless Congress takes action to adjust that expiration.

Family Related Tax Item Updates:

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). For 2021, the maximum EITC amount available is \$3,618 for taxpayers filing jointly with one child; \$5,980 for two children; \$6,728 for three or more children and \$543 for no children. Phaseouts are based on filing status and number of children and begin at \$8,880 for single taxpayers with no children and \$19,520 for single taxpayers with one or more children.

Child Tax Credit. The Child Tax Credit may be worth as much as \$2,000 per qualifying child depending on your income, and includes a refundable piece of up to \$1,400 per child. A refundable credit means that you can use the credit even if you do not owe any tax.

Kiddie Tax. For 2021, the exemption from the kiddie tax remains \$2,200 for 202. A parent will be able to elect to include a child's income on the parent's return for 2021 if the child's income is more than \$1,100 and less than \$11,000.

Adoption Credit. For 2021, the credit allowed for an adoption of a child with special needs is \$14,400, and the maximum credit allowed for other adoptions is the amount of qualified adoption expenses up to \$14,400. Phaseouts do apply beginning at taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) in excess of \$216,660 and completely phased out for taxpayers with MAGI of \$256,660 or more.

[continued...]

Information gathered from irs.gov

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Education Related Updates:

American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC). Formerly known as the Hope Scholarship Credit, the AOTC for 2021 will be an amount equal to 100% of qualified tuition and related expenses not in excess of \$2,000 plus 25% of those expenses in excess of \$2,000 but not in excess of \$4,000. That means that the maximum AOTC allowable for 2021 is \$2,500. Income restrictions do apply and for 2021, those kick in for taxpayers with MAGI in excess of \$80,000 (\$160,000 for a joint return).

Lifetime Learning Credit. As with the AOTC, income restrictions apply to the Lifetime Learning Credit. For 2021, those restrictions begin with taxpayers with MAGI in excess of \$59,000 (\$119,000 for a joint return).

Student Loan Interest Deduction. For 2021, the maximum amount that you can take as a deduction for interest paid on student loans remains at \$2,500. Phaseouts apply for taxpayers with MAGI in excess of \$70,000 (\$140,000 for joint returns), and is completely phased out for taxpayers with MAGI of \$85,000 or more (\$170,000 or more for joint returns).

Health Care and Fringe Benefit Updates:

Flexible Spending Accounts. The annual dollar limit on employee contributions to employer-sponsored healthcare flexible spending accounts (FSA) remains at \$2,750 for 2021.

High-Deductible Health Plans (HDHP). For 2021, the minimum annual deductible for individual coverage remains \$1,400, and for family coverage remains \$2,800. The contribution limits for a Health Savings Account (HSA) for an individual with self-only HDHP coverage is \$3,600 (up from \$3,550 in 2020), and for individuals with family HDHP coverage is \$7,200 (up from \$7,100 in 2020).

Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit. For 2021, the monthly limitation for transportation in a commuter highway vehicle and any transit pass is \$270. The monthly limitation for qualified parking is \$270.

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