



Retirement Facts 1

The Civil Service Retirement System

This is a non-technical summary of the laws and regulations on the subject. It should not be relied upon as a sole source of information.



**United States
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Management**

Retirement and
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Other titles in the Retirement Facts Series:

2. Military Service Credit Under the Civil Service Retirement System
3. Deposits and Redeposits Under the Civil Service Retirement System
4. Disability Retirement Under the Civil Service Retirement System
5. Survivor Benefits Under the Civil Service Retirement System
6. Early Retirement Under the Civil Service Retirement System
7. Computing Retirement Benefits Under the Civil Service Retirement System
8. Credit for Unused Sick Leave Under the Civil Service Retirement System
9. Refunds Under the Civil Service Retirement System
10. Voluntary Contributions Under the Civil Service Retirement System
11. Information for Separating CSRS Employees Who Are Not Eligible for an Immediate Annuity
12. Information About Reemployment for CSRS Annuitants

If you want information on the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), ask your employing office for a copy of "FERS" (RI90-1). If you are considering retirement within the next 5 years, ask your employing office for a copy of "Thinking About Retirement" (RI 83-11).

When You May Retire

You may retire under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) at the following ages, and receive an immediate annuity, if you have at least the amount of Federal service shown:

Type of Retirement	Minimum Age	Minimum Service (Years)
Also See The Special Requirements on the Next Page ➡		
Optional	62	5
	60	20
	55	30
Special Optional	50	20
Early Optional	Any age*	25
	50*	20
Discontinued Service	Any age*	25
	50*	20
Disability	Any age	5

* Annuity is reduced if under 55.

Special Requirements
None
None
None
Special Optional - You must retire under special provisions for air traffic controllers or law enforcement and firefighter personnel. Air traffic controllers can also retire at any age with 25 years of service as an air traffic controller.
Early Optional - Your agency must be undergoing a major reorganization, reduction-in-force, or transfer of function as determined by the Office of Personnel Management.
Discontinued Service - Your separation must be involuntary and not a removal for misconduct or delinquency.
Disability - You must be disabled for useful and efficient service in your current position and any other vacant position at the same grade or pay level within your commuting area and current agency for which you are qualified.*

*Application must be prior to retirement, or within 1 year of separation, except in cases of mental incompetence.

How Annuities Are Computed

Your basic annuity is computed based on your length of service (which includes unused sick leave if you retire on an immediate annuity) and "high-3" average pay. To determine your length of service for computation, add all your periods of creditable service, and the period represented by your unused sick leave, then eliminate from the total any fractional part of a month. Your "high-3" average pay is the highest average basic pay you earned during any 3 consecutive years of service. Generally, your basic annuity cannot be more than 80 percent of your "high-3" average pay, unless the amount over 80 percent is due to crediting your unused sick leave.

Your yearly basic annuity is computed by adding: (a) 1 1/2 percent of your "high-3" average pay times service up to 5 years; (b) 1 3/4 percent of your "high-3" pay times years of service over 5 and up to 10; and (c) 2 percent of your "high-3" pay times years of service over 10.

Your basic annuity will be reduced if: (a) you retire before age 55 (unless you retire for disability or under the special provisions for law enforcement officers, air traffic controllers, and firefighters); (b) you didn't make a deposit for service performed prior to October 1, 1982, during which no deductions were taken from your pay (non-deduction service after that date is not used in the computation of benefits if the deposit is not paid); (c) you didn't make a redeposit of a refund for a period of service that ended before October 1, 1990; or (d) you provide for a survivor annuitant.

Your annuity will be increased periodically by cost-of-living increases that occur after you retire. Your initial cost-of-living increase will be prorated based on how long you have been retired when that cost-of-living increase is granted.

Credit for Military Service

As a general rule, military service in the Armed Forces of the United States is creditable for retirement purposes if it was active service terminated under honorable conditions, and performed prior to your separation from civilian service for retirement. Military service performed on or after January 1, 1957, is normally creditable for Social Security benefits at age 62. Individuals first employed before October 1, 1982, have the option of either (1) making a 7 percent deposit for post-1956 military service, thereby avoiding a reduction in their CSRS annuity at age 62, or (2) not making the deposit and having their annuities reduced at age 62 if they are then eligible for Social Security benefits. Employees first hired by the Federal Government on or after October 1, 1982, must make the deposit or receive no credit at all, including eligibility to retire, for military service.

Disability Retirement

If you retire for disability, you may be guaranteed a minimum annuity equal to the smaller of: (a) 40 percent of your "high-3" average pay, or (b) the regular annuity obtained after increasing your service by the time between your retirement and your 60th birthday. This guaranteed minimum applies if you are under age 60 when you retire and your earned annuity based on your actual service is less than this minimum.

Exception: The guaranteed minimum does not apply if you are receiving military retired pay and/or VA compensation in lieu of all or part of the military retired pay. However, if your earned annuity plus your military benefit (or compensation) is less than what it would have been under the guaranteed minimum, the annuity is increased to bring it up to that level.

If You Retire Before Age 55

If you voluntarily retire during a major reorganization, reduction-in-force, or transfer of function, or if you are involuntarily separated and are younger than 55, your basic annuity will be reduced by one-sixth of 1 percent for each full month you are under 55.

There is no age reduction if you retire under the disability provision or under the special provisions for air traffic controllers, law enforcement officers, and firefighters.

If You Die in Service

If you die after 18 months of civilian service your widow(er) will get an annuity, provided you were married for a total of 9 months. The 9-month requirement does not apply if your death is accidental or there is a child of the marriage. Generally, your widow(er) is entitled to 55 percent of the basic annuity earned by your creditable service and average salary. However, if it will produce a higher annuity, your widow(er) will receive 55 percent of the guaranteed minimum benefit described under "Disability Retirement."

Note: *if you have a former spouse from whom you were divorced after May 6, 1985, he or she may receive, by court order all or a part of the annuity that your widow(er) would otherwise get.*

Your unmarried children will also be entitled to annuities if you die in service. Their annuities will continue until they reach age 18--or age 22 if they remain in school full-time. The annuity of a child who is incapable of self support because of a disability incurred before age 18 will continue indefinitely unless the child becomes capable of self support.

***Providing for Your Survivors
on Retirement***

If you are married when you retire, your annuity will be reduced to provide a full survivor annuity for your spouse (unless he or she consents to a lesser benefit). To provide for a survivor annuity, your annuity will be reduced by 2.5 percent of the first \$3,600, plus 10 percent of the annuity over \$3,600. The survivor annuity will be 55 percent of the amount of your annuity before this reduction. Note: If you were divorced after May 6, 1985, your former spouse may receive by court order, all or part of the survivor annuity that your current spouse would otherwise get. You can also elect a survivor annuity for a former spouse (but if you are married, you must get your spouse's consent).

If you are not retiring for disability, and are in reasonably good health, you can provide a survivor annuity for a person who has an "insurable interest" in you such as a relative who is in your care, or a current spouse who would not otherwise get a survivor annuity because of a court-ordered award to a former spouse. To provide this benefit, your annuity would be reduced from 10 to 40 percent depending on the difference in your age and the age of the person named. This reduction would be added to any reduction required to provide a survivor annuity for a spouse or former spouse.

If You Leave the Service

If you leave Federal employment before you are eligible for an "immediate" annuity, you can either have your deductions returned or leave the money in the retirement fund. If you have completed at least 5 years of civilian service and you leave your money in the fund, you will be entitled to a "deferred" annuity at age 62.

Making Payments for Previous Service

If retirement deductions were not taken from your pay during certain periods of service, you will need to pay these deductions into the retirement fund to receive full credit for the service. If you had a refund of retirement deductions for prior service, you must repay this money into the retirement fund to receive credit for service in your retirement benefits. Exception: If you retire (other than on disability) while owing a redeposit of a refund for service that ended before October 1, 1990, you will not be required to pay the redeposit in order to receive credit for that refunded service. Instead, full credit for the refunded service will be allowed in computing your annuity, but the annuity will be actuarially reduced. (See Retirement Facts pamphlets 7 and 9 for more detailed information.)

Alternative Form of Annuity

Some retirees can choose to receive an Alternative Form of Annuity, if they are eligible due to a life-threatening illness or other critical medical condition. Under this option, you receive a reduced monthly benefit, plus a lump sum payment equal to all your unrefunded contributions to the retirement fund. The amount of reduction in your monthly benefit depends on your age at the time you retire, and the amount of your retirement contributions. Your election of an Alternative Form of Annuity will not affect the potential survivor annuity payable to your spouse or children. However, you must have your spouse's consent to make this election.

You cannot choose the Alternative Form of Annuity if you are retiring for disability or if you have a former spouse who is entitled to court-ordered benefits based on your service. In addition, you may not elect the Alternative Form of Annuity unless you have a life-threatening medical condition.

CSRS Offset Employees

You are a "CSRS Offset" employee if you are one of the employees covered by CSRS and Social Security at the same time. You will be eligible to receive a CSRS annuity just as if you were covered by CSRS alone, except that the annuity payment will be reduced when you become eligible for Social Security benefits (usually at age 62). The amount of the reduction will be the amount of the Social Security benefit attributable to your service after 1983 that was covered by both CSRS and Social Security. A survivor annuity based on your service will be reduced for any survivor Social Security benefits in the same manner.