

**EIC questioned by IRS.** The IRS may ask you to provide documents to prove you are entitled to claim the EIC. We will tell you what documents to send us. These may include: birth certificates, school records, etc. The process of establishing your eligibility will delay your refund.

**Spanish version of Publication 596.** *Publicación 596SP, Crédito por Ingreso del Trabajo*, is a Spanish translation of Pub. 596. Go to [IRS.gov/Pub596SP](https://www.irs.gov/pub596sp). Or see [Ordering forms and publications](#) or [How To Get Tax Help](#), later, to find out how to order this and other IRS forms and publications.

**Photographs of missing children.** The Internal Revenue Service is a proud partner with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Photographs of missing children selected by the Center may appear in this publication on pages that would otherwise be blank. You can help bring these children home by looking at the photographs and calling 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) if you recognize a child.

**Comments and suggestions.** We welcome your comments about this publication and your suggestions for future editions.

You can send us comments through [IRS.gov/FormComments](https://www.irs.gov/FormComments). Or you can write to: Internal Revenue Service, Tax Forms and Publications, 1111 Constitution Ave. NW, IR-6526, Washington, DC 20224.

Although we can't respond individually to each comment received, we do appreciate your feedback and will consider your comments as we revise our tax forms, instructions, and publications. We can't answer tax questions sent to the above address.

**Tax questions.** If you have a tax question not answered by this publication or the *How To Get Tax Help* at the end of this publication, go to the IRS Interactive Tax Assistant page at [IRS.gov/help/ITA](https://www.irs.gov/help/ITA) where you can find topics using the search feature or by viewing the categories listed.

**Ordering tax forms and publications.** Visit [IRS.gov/FormsPubs](https://www.irs.gov/FormsPubs) to download forms and publications. Otherwise, you can go to [IRS.gov/OrderForms](https://www.irs.gov/OrderForms) to order current and prior-year forms and instructions. Your order should arrive within 10 business days.

---

# 1.

---

## Rules for Everyone

This chapter discusses Rules 1 through 7. You must meet all seven rules to qualify for the earned income credit. If you don't meet all seven rules, you can't get the credit and you don't need to read the rest of the publication.

If you meet all seven rules in this chapter, then read either chapter 2 or chapter 3 (whichever applies) for more rules you must meet.

---

## Rule 1—Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Limits

Your adjusted gross income (AGI) must be less than:

- \$50,162 (\$55,952 for married filing jointly) if you have three or more qualifying children,
- \$46,703 (\$52,493 for married filing jointly) if you have two qualifying children,
- \$41,094 (\$46,884 for married filing jointly) if you have one qualifying child, or
- \$15,570 (\$21,370 for married filing jointly) if you don't have a qualifying child.

**Adjusted gross income (AGI).** AGI is the amount on line 8b Form 1040 or 1040-SR.

If your AGI is equal to or more than the applicable limit listed above, you can't claim the EIC. You don't need to read the rest of this publication.

**Example—AGI is more than limit.** Your AGI is \$42,550, you are single, and you have one qualifying child. You can't claim the EIC because your AGI isn't less than \$41,094. However, if your filing status was married filing jointly, you might be able to claim the EIC because your AGI is less than \$46,884.

**Community property.** If you are married, but qualify to file as head of household under special rules for married taxpayers living apart (see *Rule 3*), and live in a state that has community property laws, your AGI includes that portion of both your and your spouse's wages that you are required to include in gross income. This is different from the community property rules that apply under *Rule 7*.

---

## Rule 2—You Must Have a Valid Social Security Number (SSN)

To claim the EIC, you (and your spouse, if filing a joint return) must have a valid SSN issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA) by the due date of your 2019 return (including extensions). Any qualifying child listed on Schedule EIC also must have a valid SSN by the due date of your 2019 return (including extensions). (See *Rule 8* if you have a qualifying child.)

If your social security card (or your spouse's, if filing a joint return) says "Not valid for employment" and your SSN was issued so that you (or your spouse) could get a federally funded benefit, you can't get the EIC. An example of a federally funded benefit is Medicaid. If you have a card with the legend "Not valid for employment" and your immigration status has changed so that you are now a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, ask the SSA for a new social security card without the legend.

**U.S. citizen.** If you were a U.S. citizen when you received your SSN, you have a valid SSN.

**Valid for work only with INS authorization or DHS authorization.** If your social security card reads “Valid for work only with INS authorization” or “Valid for work only with DHS authorization,” you have a valid SSN, but only if that authorization is still valid.

**SSN missing or incorrect.** If an SSN for you or your spouse is missing from your tax return or is incorrect, you may not get the EIC.

If an SSN for you or your spouse is missing from your return because either you or your spouse didn't have a valid SSN on or before the due date of your 2019 return (including extensions) and you later get a valid SSN, you can't file an amended return to claim the EIC.

**Other taxpayer identification number.** You can't get the EIC if, instead of an SSN, you (or your spouse, if filing a joint return) have an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN). ITINs are issued by the Internal Revenue Service to noncitizens who can't get an SSN.

**No SSN.** If you don't have a valid SSN on or before the due date of your 2019 return (including extensions), enter “No” on the dotted line next to line 18a (Form 1040 or 1040-SR). You can't claim the EIC on either your original or an amended 2019 return.

**Getting an SSN.** If you (or your spouse, if filing a joint return) don't have an SSN, you can apply for one by filing Form SS-5 with the SSA. You can get Form SS-5 online at [SSA.gov](http://SSA.gov), from your local SSA office, or by calling the SSA at 1-800-772-1213.

**Filing deadline approaching and still no SSN.** If the filing deadline is approaching and you still don't have an SSN, you can request an automatic 6-month extension of time to file your return. You can get this extension by filing Form 4868, Application for Automatic Extension of Time To File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return. For more information, see the instructions for Form 4868. Instead of filing Form 4868, you can apply for an automatic extension by making an electronic payment by the due date of your return.

---

## Rule 3—Your Filing Status Cannot Be “Married Filing Separately”

If you are married, you usually must file a joint return to claim the EIC. Your filing status can't be “Married filing separately.”

**Spouse did not live with you.** If you are married and your spouse did not live in your home at any time during

the last 6 months of the year, you may be able to file as head of household, instead of married filing separately. In that case, you may be able to claim the EIC. For detailed information about filing as head of household, see Pub. 501, Dependents, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information.

---

## Rule 4—You Must Be a U.S. Citizen or Resident Alien All Year

If you (or your spouse, if married) were a nonresident alien for any part of the year, you can't claim the earned income credit unless your filing status is married filing jointly. You can use that filing status only if one spouse is a U.S. citizen or resident alien and you choose to treat the nonresident spouse as a U.S. resident. If you make this choice, you and your spouse are taxed on your worldwide income. If you need more information on making this choice, get Pub. 519, U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens. If you (or your spouse, if married) were a nonresident alien for any part of the year and your filing status isn't married filing jointly, enter “No” on the dotted line next to line 18a (Form 1040 or 1040-SR).

---

## Rule 5—You Cannot File Form 2555

You can't claim the earned income credit if you file Form 2555, Foreign Earned Income. You file these forms to exclude income earned in foreign countries from your gross income, or to deduct or exclude a foreign housing amount. U.S. possessions aren't foreign countries. See Pub. 54, Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad, for more detailed information.

---

## Rule 6—Your Investment Income Must Be \$3,600 or Less

You can't claim the earned income credit unless your investment income is \$3,600 or less. If your investment income is more than \$3,600, you can't claim the credit.

Use Worksheet 1 in this chapter to figure your investment income.