

Calculating Your RMD in 5 Easy Steps

What is an RMD (required minimum distribution)?

An RMD is the minimum amount that must be withdrawn from a retirement account each year.

When are you subject to RMDs?

Traditional IRA owners are subject to RMDs beginning in the year in which they turn age 70 ½. Beneficiaries of IRAs and/or Roth IRAs are subject to RMDs beginning in the year after the year of the IRA (or Roth IRA) account owner's death.

- #1 Determine your distribution year.** The distribution year is the year **for** which you are taking a distribution, not necessarily the year **in** which you take that distribution. For instance, if you turn age 70 ½ in 2016, you do not have to take your first RMD until April 1, 2017. If you wait until April 1, 2017 to take that distribution however, the distribution year is still for 2016. In addition, you will have to take a second distribution by the end of 2017 for 2017. After the year you turn age 70 ½, all distributions should be made by December 31 of each year for which they are being taken.
- #2 Find the retirement plan balance.** Use the balance as of December 31 of the prior year. Add back any outstanding rollovers and recharacterizations.
- #3 Determine the life expectancy factor.** Most IRA owners look up their age on the Uniform Lifetime Table in order to determine their factor. If a spouse is the sole beneficiary of an IRA account for the entire year and is more than 10 years younger than the account owner, the Joint Life Expectancy Table is used. Most beneficiaries look up their life expectancy in the year after the year of the account owner's death using the Single Life Table. Going forward each year that factor would simply be reduced by one (there are some exceptions for spousal beneficiaries). Make sure to look up the actual ages of the individual as of the last day of the year.
- #4 More mathematics.** Divide the retirement plan balance (step 2) by the life expectancy factor (step 3). The result is the RMD that must be taken. Be sure to take the RMD by December 31 of the distribution year (except IRA owners in the year they turn 70 ½). **REMEMBER** there is a 50% penalty for any portion of an RMD that is not taken.
- #5 Take notice.** RMDs from owned IRA accounts can be aggregated and RMDs from owned 403(b) accounts can be aggregated. Accounts inherited from the same person can aggregate RMDs. All other types of accounts cannot be aggregated.