# February Financial Fitness

Duncklee & Nott Monthly Newsletter


**Kenneth Nott, CFP®, AIF®, CFS**
**Duncklee & Nott**
19 Central Street • Hallowell • ME
207-622-5222 • 877-582-2835
ken@dnretire.com

Greetings,

We want to remind you of a few important things to keep on your radar now that tax season is here. Please remember that 1099's from NFS / Commonwealth for non-retirement accounts usually are not *mailed* until February 15th and take time to arrive. Keep in mind that if you have had delayed 1099's in the past, it will likely happen each year. In several accounts 1099's may not go out until the end of February. Accountants can prepare taxes before and wait to finalize them until mid-March if they are alerted ahead of time. Additionally, there is still time to make 2022 IRA and Roth IRA contributions.

Enjoy this month's articles!

Ken, Megan, Sharon, Brad, and Ross

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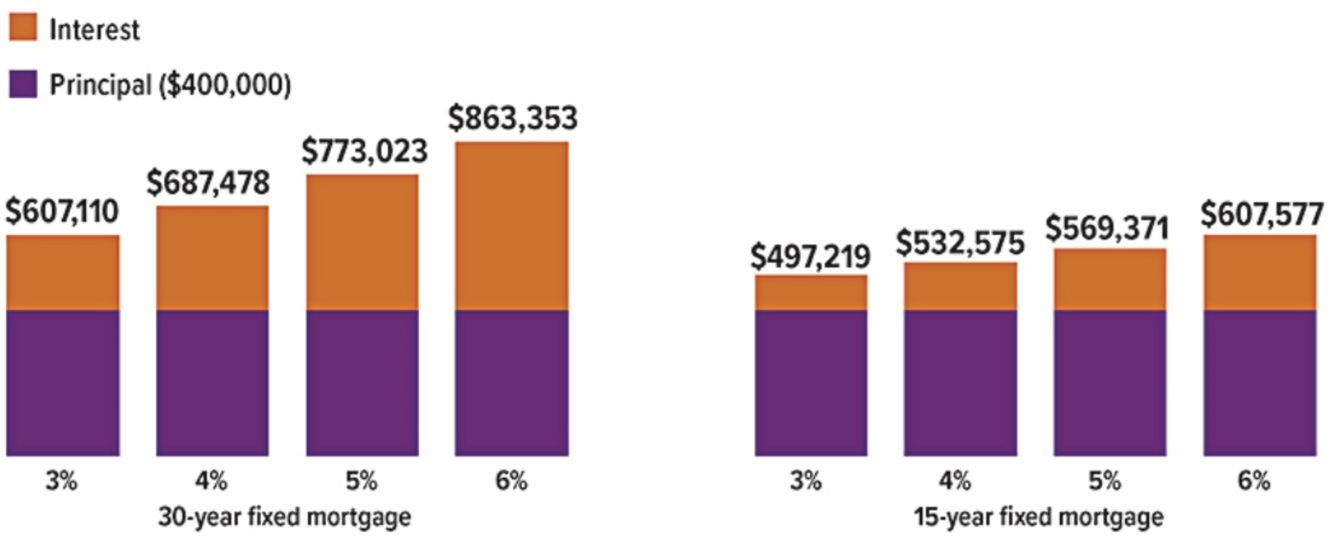
## The Cost of Borrowing

In April 2022, the average interest rate for a 30-year fixed mortgage surpassed 5% for the first time since April 2010, and it was still above 5% in August. With higher rates, it's more important than ever to understand how interest increases the total cost of a mortgage.

The chart below shows the total cost for a $400,000 conventional 30-year fixed mortgage and an accelerated 15-year fixed mortgage (typically used for refinancing) at different interest rates. A $400,000 mortgage would enable a buyer to purchase a $500,000 home with a 20% down payment.




Source: Freddie Mac, 2022. *This hypothetical example of mathematical principles is used for illustrative purposes only. Actual results will vary.*

# Key Retirement and Tax Numbers for 2023

Every year, the Internal Revenue Service announces cost-of-living adjustments that affect contribution limits for retirement plans and various tax deduction, exclusion, exemption, and threshold amounts. Here are a few of the key adjustments for 2023.

## Estate, Gift, and Generation-Skipping Transfer Tax

- The annual gift tax exclusion (and annual generation-skipping transfer tax exclusion) for 2023 is $17,000, up from $16,000 in 2022.
- The gift and estate tax basic exclusion amount (and generation-skipping transfer tax exemption) for 2023 is $12,920,000, up from $12,060,000 in 2022.

## Standard Deduction

A taxpayer can generally choose to itemize certain deductions or claim a standard deduction on the federal income tax return. In 2023, the standard deduction is:

- $13,850 (up from $12,950 in 2022) for single filers or married individuals filing separate returns
- $27,700 (up from $25,900 in 2022) for married joint filers
- $20,800 (up from $19,400 in 2022) for heads of household

The additional standard deduction amount for the blind and those age 65 or older in 2023 is:

- $1,850 (up from $1,750 in 2022) for single filers and heads of household
- $1,500 (up from $1,400 in 2022) for all other filing statuses

Special rules apply for those who can be claimed as a dependent by another taxpayer.

## IRAs

The combined annual limit on contributions to traditional and Roth IRAs is $6,500 in 2023 (up from $6,000 in 2022), with individuals age 50 or older able to contribute an additional $1,000. The limit on contributions to a Roth IRA phases out for certain modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) ranges *(see chart).* For individuals who are active participants in an employer-sponsored retirement plan, the deduction for contributions to a traditional IRA also phases out for certain MAGI ranges *(see chart).* The limit on nondeductible contributions to a traditional IRA is not subject to phaseout based on MAGI.

**MAGI Ranges: Contributions to a Roth IRA**

| | 2022 | 2023 |
|---|---|---|
| Single/Head of household | $129,000–$144,000 | $138,000–$153,000 |
| Married filing jointly | $204,000–$214,000 | $218,000–$228,000 |
| Married filing separately | $0–$10,000 | $0–$10,000 |

**MAGI Ranges: Deductible Contributions to a Traditional IRA**

| | 2022 | 2023 |
|---|---|---|
| Single/Head of household | $68,000–$78,000 | $73,000–$83,000 |
| Married filing jointly | $109,000–$129,000 | $116,000–$136,000 |

Note: The 2023 phaseout range is $218,000-$228,000 (up from $204,000-$214,000 in 2022) when the individual making the IRA contribution is not covered by a workplace retirement plan but is filing jointly with a spouse who is covered. The phaseout range is $0-$10,000 when the individual is married filing separately and either spouse is covered by a workplace plan.

## Employer-Sponsored Retirement Plans

- Employees who participate in 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 plans can defer up to $22,500 in compensation in 2023 (up from $20,500 in 2022); employees age 50 or older can defer up to an additional $7,500 in 2023 (up from $6,500 in 2022).
- Employees participating in a SIMPLE retirement plan can defer up to $15,500 in 2023 (up from $14,000 in 2022), and employees age 50 or older can defer up to an additional $3,500 in 2023 (up from $3,000 in 2022).

## Kiddie Tax: Child's Unearned Income

Under the kiddie tax, a child's unearned income above $2,500 in 2023 (up from $2,300 in 2022) is taxed using the parents' tax rates.

# A 529 Plan Can Help Jump-Start Your College Fund

Busy, cash-strapped parents might welcome all the help they can get when saving for college. Building a college fund, even a small one, can help families feel more in control and less stressed during the college research and admission process. Think of a college fund as a down payment. Then at college time, it can be supplemented by financial aid (grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study), current income, and student funds. A good benchmark is to try and save at least 50% of your child's projected college costs, but any amount is better than nothing.

A 529 savings plan can be instrumental in building a college fund. This individual investment account offers the opportunity for tax-free earnings if the funds are used for college, making every dollar count. (For withdrawals not used for qualified education expenses, earnings may be subject to taxation as ordinary income and a 10% penalty.) You can set up monthly electronic fund transfers from your bank account to put your savings on autopilot. But one-off contributions are allowed, too, and the holidays can be an excellent time for grandparents or other relatives to make a small contribution as a gift. The new year is also a good time to re-double your efforts on building a college fund. Here are some common questions on opening a 529 savings account.

## Can I open a 529 savings account in any state's plan?

Yes. Currently, all states except Wyoming offer one or more 529 savings plans, and they are generally open to residents of any state. However, it's a good idea to look at your own state's 529 plan first, because some states may restrict any tax benefits (e.g., tax deduction for contributions, tax-free earnings) to residents who participate only in the in-state plan. Why open an account in another state's 529 plan? There could be a number of reasons, including a wider range of investment options, a solid investment track record, an excellent investment manager, or lower management fees. For a list of all 529 plans by state, visit the Saving for College website.

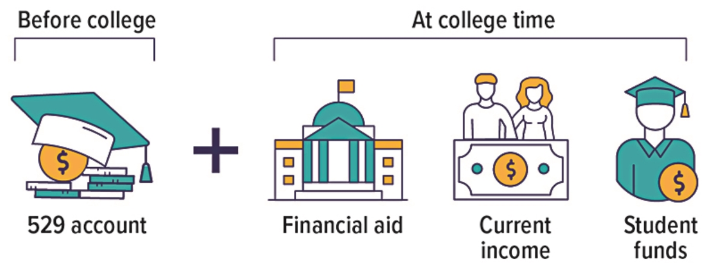
## What happens if I open a 529 plan in one state and then move to another state?

Essentially nothing. You can simply leave the account open and keep contributing to it. Alternatively, you can switch to a different 529 plan by rolling over the assets from the original plan to a new 529 plan. You can keep the same beneficiary (under IRS rules, you are allowed one 529 plan same-beneficiary rollover once every 12 months), but check the details of each plan for any potential restrictions. If you decide to stay with your original 529 plan, just remember that your new state might limit any potential 529 plan tax benefits to residents who participate in the in-state plan.

## Should I open one 529 account for both of my kids or a separate account for each?

That depends on your personal preferences, but opening separate accounts often makes sense. Two accounts let you contribute different amounts for each child as needed, tailor your investment portfolios to each child's age, and avoid commingling funds. If you choose one account and invest too aggressively, you might incur losses when your older child is close to college. And if you invest too conservatively, your investment returns may not keep pace with college inflation for your younger child. You also run the risk of depleting most or all of the funds for your oldest child.

### How a 529 Account Helps at College Time




## Does it make sense to open a 529 account if my child is a few years from college?

It might. Even if your child is only a few years from college, you could theoretically save for another four or five years, right up through junior year of college. You could open a 529 account, contribute monthly, and any earnings would be tax-free if the money is used for college. Having a designated college account instead of a general savings account might also lessen the temptation to dip into it for non-college expenses.

*As with other investments, there are generally fees and expenses associated with participation in a 529 plan. There is also the risk that the investments may lose money or not perform well enough to cover college costs as anticipated. The tax implications of a 529 plan should be discussed with your legal and/or tax professionals because they can vary significantly from state to state. Most states offering their own 529 plans may provide advantages and benefits exclusively for their residents and taxpayers, which may include financial aid, scholarship funds, and protection from creditors. Before investing in a 529 plan, consider the investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses, which are available in the issuer's official statement and should be read carefully. The official disclosure statements and applicable prospectuses, which contain this and other information about the investment options, underlying investments, and investment company, can be obtained by contacting your financial professional.*

# Double Up with a Spousal IRA

If you and your spouse are looking for a way to build your retirement savings but one of you is not working, you might consider funding a spousal IRA. This could be the same IRA that the spouse contributed to while working or it could be a new account.

In either case, IRS rules allow a married couple to fund separate IRA accounts for each spouse based on the couple's joint income. The total of both IRA contributions cannot exceed the total taxable income reported on the couple's joint tax return.

You can make contributions for 2022 up to the April 2023 tax filing deadline. You might also get a head start for 2023 and contribute for both years.

For tax year 2022, an individual with earned income from wages or self-employment can contribute up to $6,000 annually to his or her own IRA and up to $6,000 more to a spouse's IRA. An additional $1,000 catch-up contribution can be made for each spouse who is 50 or older. For tax year 2023, the contribution limit increases to $6,500, but the $1,000 catch-up contribution remains the same.

## Traditional IRA Deductibility

If neither spouse is an active participant in a workplace retirement plan such as a 401(k), contributions to a traditional IRA are fully tax deductible. However, if one or both are active participants, income limits may affect the deductibility of contributions. Limits are higher for contributions to the IRA of a nonparticipating spouse, so some participants in workplace plans who earn too much to deduct an IRA contribution for themselves may be able to make a deductible IRA contribution to a spousal account.

For joint filers, the ability to deduct contributions to the IRA of an active participant in 2022 is phased out at a modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) between $109,000 and $129,000, but contributions to the IRA of a nonparticipating spouse are phased out at a MAGI between $204,000 and $214,000. (For 2023, phaseouts increase to $116,000–$136,000 and $218,000–$228,000.)

Withdrawals from traditional IRAs and workplace plans are taxed as ordinary income and may be subject to a 10% penalty if withdrawn prior to age 59½, with certain exceptions.

## The Roth Option

Roth IRA contributions are made with after-tax funds, so they can be withdrawn without penalty at any time. For a tax-free withdrawal of earnings, the account must meet a five-year holding requirement, and the withdrawal must take place after age 59½ (or result from the owner's death or disability).

Regardless of participation in a workplace plan, the ability to contribute to a Roth IRA in 2022 is phased out at a joint MAGI between $204,000 and $214,000 ($218,000–$228,000 in 2023).