

Compare College Savings Choices

There are many choices for you to consider when charting your child's course to college. The option you choose depends on how many years you have to save, your overall financial goals and your investment preferences. With average college costs continually on the rise, there's no better time to open an account than now.



	Vermont Higher Education Investment Plan	529 Plans General	Independent 529 Plan	529 State Prepaid Plans	Coverdell Education Savings Account (CESA or ESA)	Custodial Accounts (UGMA/UTMA)	Taxable Accounts	Traditional (Classic) IRA	Education Savings Bonds
Federal Tax Treatment	Earnings portion of withdrawals used to pay qualified education expenses are federal income tax-free.	Earnings portion of withdrawals used to pay qualified education expenses are federal income tax-free.	Neither the account owner nor the beneficiary is subject to federal income tax if a Tuition Certificate is used to pay for tuition at a member institution. Redemptions of tuition certificates for qualified tuition expenses are federal income tax-free.	Neither the account owner nor the beneficiary is subject to federal income tax if account is used to pay for tuition at a participating institution.	Distributions used to pay for qualified education expenses are federal income tax-free. The law allowing for federal income tax-free qualified withdrawals is set to expire on December 31, 2010. Congress may or may not extend this law beyond that date.	First \$950 of earnings is federal income tax free. Earnings between \$950 and \$1,900 are taxed at the child's rate. Earnings above \$1,900 for certain children through age 23 are taxed at the parents' rate.	Fully taxable	Federal income tax deductible (subject to income limits). Earnings are federal income tax-free until withdrawal at age 59 1/2. Penalty free withdrawals for qualified higher education expenses, but entire withdrawal taxed at owners tax rate.	Interest earned is federal income tax-free if used for qualified higher education expenses. (Subject to income limits.)
State Tax Treatment	An Account Owner in the Vermont Higher Education Investment Plan who is a Vermont taxpayer may receive a nonrefundable tax credit of 10% of the first \$2,500 contributed per beneficiary, per year. The credit is only available to taxpayers to the extent of their tax liability. A taxpayer who has received this credit is subject to repayment of up to a maximum of the total credits previously received if the taxpayer makes certain types of withdrawals from the Plan which are not qualified withdrawals.	Some states may offer different or additional tax incentives. State income tax treatment is dependent on state tax law.	Please consult your own tax advisor as to the tax consequences applicable to your particular situation.	Some states may offer different or additional tax incentives. State income tax treatment is dependent on state tax law.	No state tax deduction.	No state tax deduction.	State income tax treatment is dependent on state tax law.	State income tax treatment is dependent on state tax law.	State income tax treatment is dependent on state tax law.
Federal Tax on Non-Qualified Withdrawals	Any earnings subject to income tax and 10% additional tax.	Any earnings subject to income tax and 10% additional tax.	Any earnings subject to income tax and 10% additional tax.	Any earnings subject to income tax and 10% additional tax.	Any earnings subject to income tax and 10% additional tax.	No penalties.	No penalties.	Any earnings subject to income tax and 10% additional tax.	3 months of interest forfeited if redeemed within first 5 years.

For information on Federal tax treatment, see IRS Publication 970, or consult your financial advisor. For more information on state tax treatment, check with your financial advisor.

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Participation in Independent 529 Plan does not guarantee admission to any member college or university. Consult the Schedule of Participating Institutions and Tuition Rates (PDF) at www.independent529plan.org or call 1-888-718-7878.

Information on industry-average fees is based on "Fees and Expenses of Mutual Funds 2006," Fundamentals, Investment Company Institute, Vol. 16, No.2, June 2007

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Fees Assessed	Total annual asset-based management fee is computed at an annual rate of 0.53% to 0.89% of the average daily net assets of your account, excluding assets held in the Principal Plus Interest Option. No other sales charges, enrollment or maintenance fees.	Typically, an asset-based management fee. Industry average ranges from less than half a percent to slightly over 1 percent per year. May incur sales charge up to 5.75% if purchased through a broker/advisor.	No fees charged to account owners. 100% of contributions go toward the purchase of tuition.	Varies by state.	Depends upon underlying investment vehicle. Industry average ranges from less than half a percent to slightly over 1 percent per year.	Depends upon underlying investment vehicle. Industry average ranges from less than half a percent to slightly over 1 percent per year.	Depends upon underlying investment vehicle. Industry average ranges from less than half a percent to slightly over 1 percent per year.	Depends upon underlying investment vehicle. Industry average ranges from less than half a percent to slightly over 1 percent per year.	None.
Qualified Expenses	Tuition, mandatory fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for enrollment or attendance; certain room and board costs, certain expenses for "special needs" students.	Tuition, mandatory fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for enrollment or attendance; certain room and board costs, certain expenses for "special needs" students.	Undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees at any member college at which the beneficiary is admitted and becomes enrolled.	Most plans are designed to cover tuition and fees at in-state colleges and universities. Some have provision to include room and board.	Post-secondary costs, K-12 costs.	Anything that benefits the minor. At age of majority (18 or 21 depending on state), account becomes property of the child.	Not applicable, can be used for any purpose.	Unlimited. Can make penalty free withdrawals for qualified higher education expenses.	Tuition and mandatory fees. Payments to qualified State tuition programs, 529 Plans or CESAs are also eligible. Room and board, and books are not qualified expenses.
Investment Control	Vermont Student Assistance Corp. (VSAC)	Registered account owner, program management varies by state.	Registered account owner, program management by the Tuition Plan Consortium Board.	Registered account owner, program management varies by state.	Registered account owner, program management varies by state.	Custodian until child reaches age of majority (18 or 21 depending on state), investment management varies by provider.	Registered account owner, program management varies by provider.	Registered account owner, program management varies by provider.	Registered account owner, program management varies by provider.
Investment Options	Six investment options; can invest in one or more of the following: Managed Allocation Option Diversified Equity Option Equity Index Option Balanced Fund Option Fixed-Income Option Principal Plus Interest Option	Varies by state.	Tuition Certificate is purchased. See Program Disclosure Booklet.	Varies by state.	Mutual funds and securities.	UGMA: mutual funds, securities. UTMA: mutual funds, securities, real estate, royalties, patents, and paintings.	Investments chosen by the individual.	Investments chosen by the individual.	Series EE bonds issued January 1990 and later, and all Series I Bonds.

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Federal Estate Planning and Gift Tax Treatment* *Each individual's tax situation will be different. Consult your tax advisor.	Annual gift tax exclusion of up to \$13,000 per individual donor per beneficiary. A contribution in excess of annual gift tax exclusion amount up to \$65,000 can be prorated over 5 years and treated as a gift in each of those years.	Annual gift tax exclusion of up to \$13,000 per individual donor per beneficiary. A contribution in excess of annual gift tax exclusion amount up to \$65,000 can be prorated over 5 years and treated as a gift in each of those years.	Annual gift tax exclusion of up to \$13,000 per individual donor per beneficiary. A contribution in excess of annual gift tax exclusion amount up to \$65,000 can be prorated over 5 years and treated as a gift in each of those years.	Annual gift tax exclusion of up to \$13,000 per individual donor per beneficiary. A contribution in excess of annual gift tax exclusion amount up to \$65,000 can be prorated over 5 years and treated as a gift in each of those years.	Annual gift tax exclusion of up to \$13,000 per individual donor, per beneficiary. The rule for contributions in excess of annual gift tax exclusion has no significance for regular contributions to Coverdell accounts because the \$2,000 maximum contribution is smaller than the annual gift tax exclusion.	Annual gift tax exclusion of up to \$13,000 per individual donor, per beneficiary.	N/A	N/A	Annual gift tax exclusion of up to \$13,000 per donor, per beneficiary.
Contribution Limit	No annual limit. \$240,100 maximum account balance limit per beneficiary (total of all VHEIP accounts). Account can continue to accrue interest.	No annual limit. Maximum account balance limit per beneficiary may be as high as \$300,000+ for some plans.	No annual limit. Maximum account balance limit per beneficiary is cost of 5 years full time tuition at the most expensive member college during the Program Year for a new born, which is \$209,650 for 2009-2010.	No annual limit. Maximum varies by state. Typical range is \$200,000 to \$300,000, which would cover up to 5 years of college costs.	Up to \$2,000 per year, per beneficiary (until beneficiary reaches age 18, unless he/she is a "special needs" beneficiary). Not available to high-income families (\$220,000 joint - maximum MAGI, \$110,000 single - maximum MAGI)	Unlimited.	Unlimited.	2009 Limit: Age 49 and below: \$5,000 Age 50 and above: \$6,000	Series EE bond limit of \$30,000 purchase price per year per person. No limit on the amount of bonds that you can accumulate over a lifetime.
Investment Risk	Subject to market fluctuations. Level of risk will depend upon underlying investment vehicle used. It is possible that returns will be less than the rate of increase in higher education costs. No one can predict returns. There is a risk that any investor could lose part or all of the value of his or her account.	Subject to market fluctuations. Level of risk will depend upon underlying investment vehicle used. It is possible that returns will be less than the rate of increase in higher education costs. No one can predict returns. There is a risk that any investor could lose part or all of the value of his or her account.	Assets held in a qualified trust. Participating institutions bear financial risk associated with advance payment of tuition. However, if funds are not used for tuition, the return on a refund may be less than the amount that could have been received in another investment. Refund amount is capped at a maximum return/loss of 2% per annum based on the performance of the Program Trust.	State agencies typically guarantee the benefit, but not in all cases. Some state-sponsored prepaid plans have closed to new entrants.	Subject to market fluctuations. Level of risk will depend upon underlying investment vehicle used.	Subject to market fluctuations. Level of risk will depend upon underlying investment vehicle used.	Subject to market fluctuations. Level of risk will depend upon underlying investment vehicle used.	Subject to market fluctuations. Level of risk will depend upon underlying investment vehicle used.	Fixed rate, may not keep pace with tuition inflation. Backed by the United States government.

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Control of Account	Account Owner, Custodian or Entity, but may vary by State.	Account Owner, Custodian or Entity, but may vary by State.	Registered Owner or Custodian.	Registered Owner or Custodian.	Parent/Legal Guardian. Beneficiary at age of majority (18 or 21 depending on state).	Custodian. Beneficiary at age of majority (18 or 21 depending on state).	Registered Owner or Custodian.	Registered Owner or Custodian.	Registered Owner or Custodian.
Federal Financial Aid Impact	If owned by parent, considered a parental asset. Generally assessed at up to 5.6%. Impact on financial aid can vary by institution. Please contact your institution of interest directly.	If owned by parent, considered a parental asset. Generally assessed at up to 5.6%. Impact on financial aid can vary by institution. Please contact your institution of interest directly.	If owned by parent, considered a parental asset. Generally assessed at up to 5.6%. Impact on financial aid can vary by institution. Please contact your institution of interest directly.	If owned by parent, considered a parental asset. Generally assessed at up to 5.6%. Impact on financial aid can vary by institution. Please contact your institution of interest directly.	If a parental asset, generally assessed at up to 5.6%. If a student asset, generally assessed at 20%. Impact on financial aid can vary by institution. Please contact your institution of interest directly.	Considered student asset. Generally assessed at 20%. Impact on financial aid can vary by institution. Please contact your institution of interest directly.	If a parental asset, generally assessed at up to 5.6%. If a student asset, generally assessed at 35%. Impact on financial aid can vary by institution. Please contact your institution of interest directly.	IRA assets are not counted as parental assets for federal financial aid.	Considered parental asset. Generally assessed at up to 5.6%. Impact on financial aid can vary by institution. Please contact your institution of interest directly.
Income Restrictions	None.	None.	None.	None.	For 2009: Single filers*: \$95,000-\$110,000 Joint filers*: \$190,000-\$220,000 *These are phase-out ranges related to potential tax deduction(s).	None.	None.	For 2009: Single filers: \$55,000-\$65,000 Joint filers: \$89,000-\$109,000 *These are phase-out ranges related to potential tax deduction(s).	Tax benefit eligibility for 2009: Single filers: \$67,950-\$84,950 Joint filers: \$104,900-\$134,900 *These are phase-out ranges related to potential tax deduction(s).

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