

THREE WAYS TO CLAIM HIGHER RATES OF TAX RELIEF

HARGREAVES
LANSDOWN

One of the biggest attractions of using a personal pension scheme to save for retirement is the generous tax relief given on contributions. Tax relief is essentially a top up paid by the government as an incentive to save for later life.

Basic-rate tax relief is automatically added to the amount you pay in (which works out as a 25% top-up), and this is paid directly into the pension fund. If you pay a higher rate of tax, you may be able to claim more. The amount of additional tax relief you get will depend on how much tax you pay at a higher rate. Generally, the greater your income (and the more tax you pay at a higher rate), the more tax relief you'll be able to claim.

If you want to claim higher-rate tax relief, or Scottish intermediate-rate tax relief, you can do so through your self-assessment tax return or by logging into the HMRC website at www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-tax-relief-on-your-private-pension-payments. Please note, if you complete a self-assessment tax return, you must use this method. If you live in the UK and you want to claim additional-rate (or advanced or top-rate for Scottish taxpayers) tax relief, you can only do this through your self-assessment tax return.

1 Complete the relevant section of your self-assessment tax form

To claim your additional tax relief this way, you may receive relief as a rebate at the end of the tax year, or a reduction in your tax liability by an alteration to your tax code.

You should state the amount you have contributed to your personal, stakeholder or self-invested personal pension. Make sure you enter the gross contribution (the amount you have paid in yourself, plus basic-rate tax relief). Please note you should not include your employer's contributions.

Not entering the gross contribution is one of the most common mistakes people make on their tax returns. Unfortunately it can be an expensive mistake, as entering the wrong figure can mean not getting all the tax relief you're entitled to. You can find the gross amount you have paid into your pension during the tax year on your annual pension statement.

2 Log into Government Gateway

If you don't complete a self-assessment tax form, you can claim back higher-rate or Scottish intermediate-rate tax relief by logging into the HMRC website and following instructions.

www.access.service.gov.uk/login/signin/creds

You'll need to sign in with your Government Gateway user ID and password (if you do not have a user ID, you can create one when you first try to sign in).

Please visit the HMRC website for details of what you'll need.

3 Write to your tax office

You'll need to send a letter to HMRC if you're:

- unable to claim online
- an agent acting on behalf of a client

Please visit the HMRC website for information on what you need to include.

CLAIMING ADDITIONAL RELIEF FOR PREVIOUS YEARS

If you've made pension contributions which would have entitled you to additional relief in previous tax years, but have not yet claimed it, it may still be possible to claim this. The deadline is four tax years after the end of the tax year for which you're claiming. For example the deadline for claiming tax relief in respect of 2025/26 is 5 April 2030.

Contact HMRC if you think you may be able to claim tax relief for previous tax years.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

We've written this guide to give you useful information about reclaiming higher rates of UK tax. It is not personal advice and you should not make any decisions based on this information alone. If you're unsure, ask about advice. Remember tax rules can change and depend on your personal circumstances. Information correct as at 6 November 2025.